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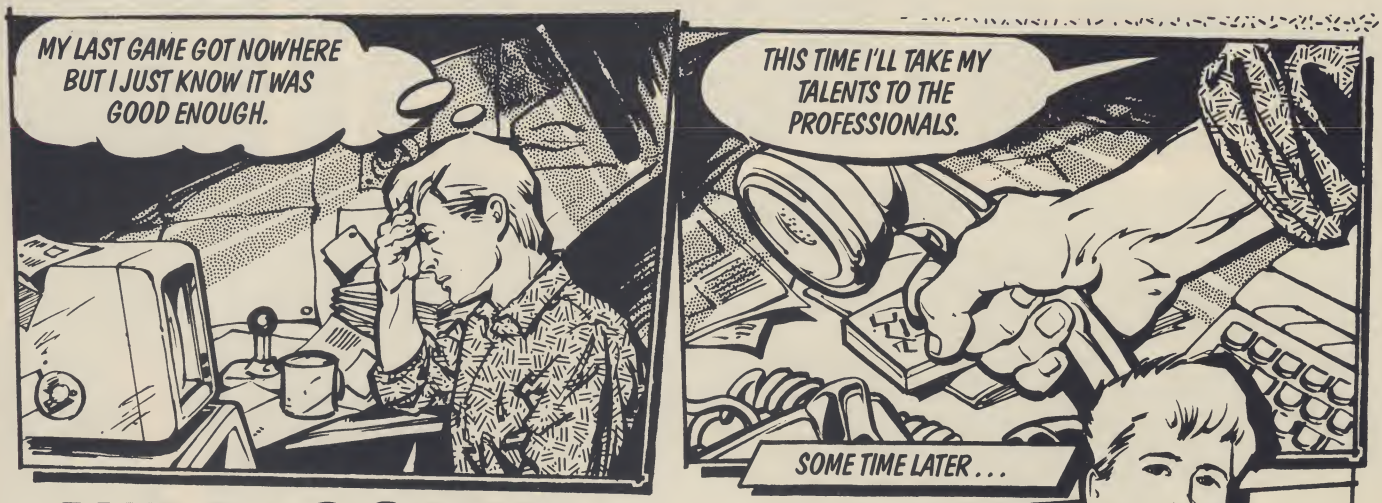

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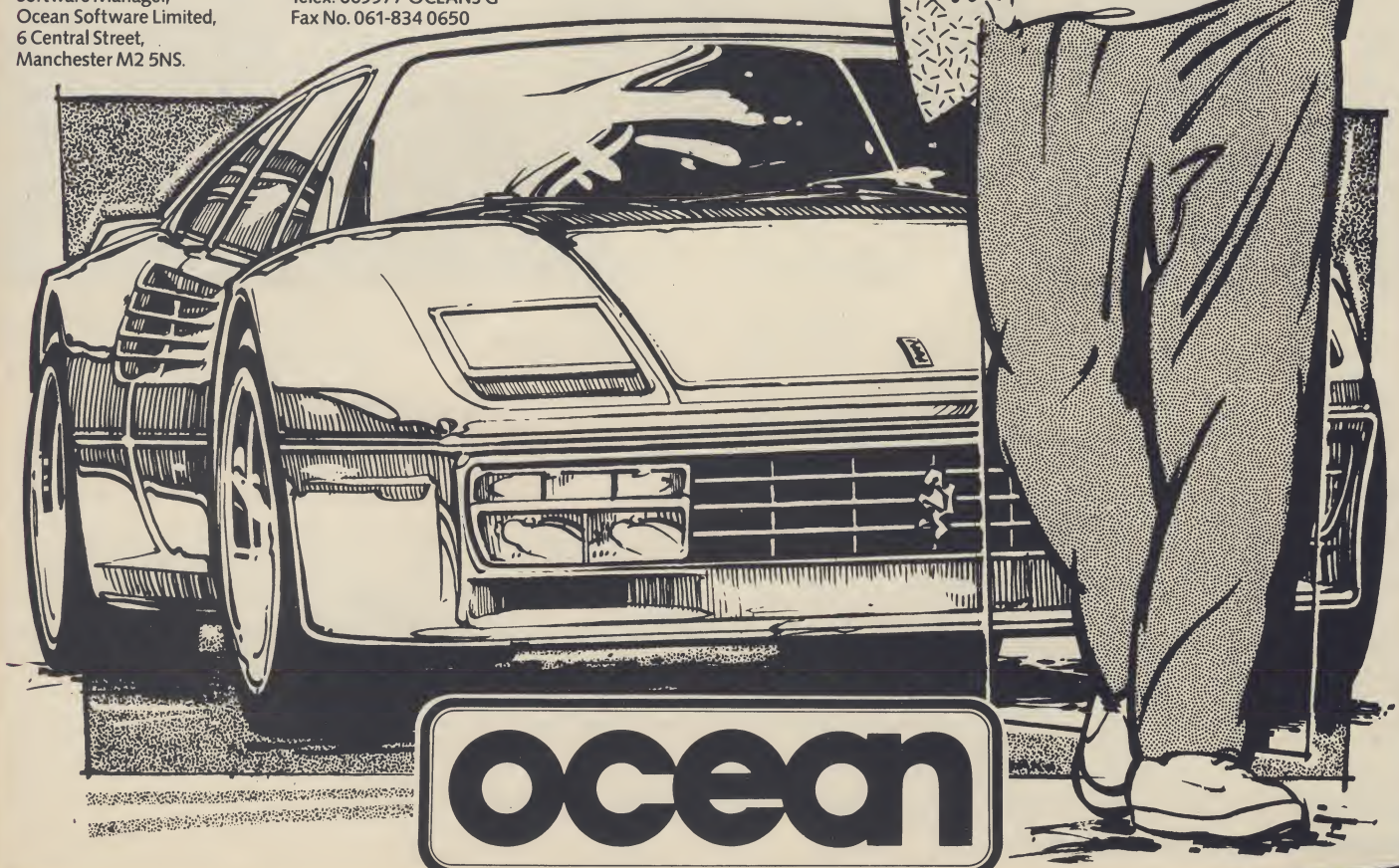

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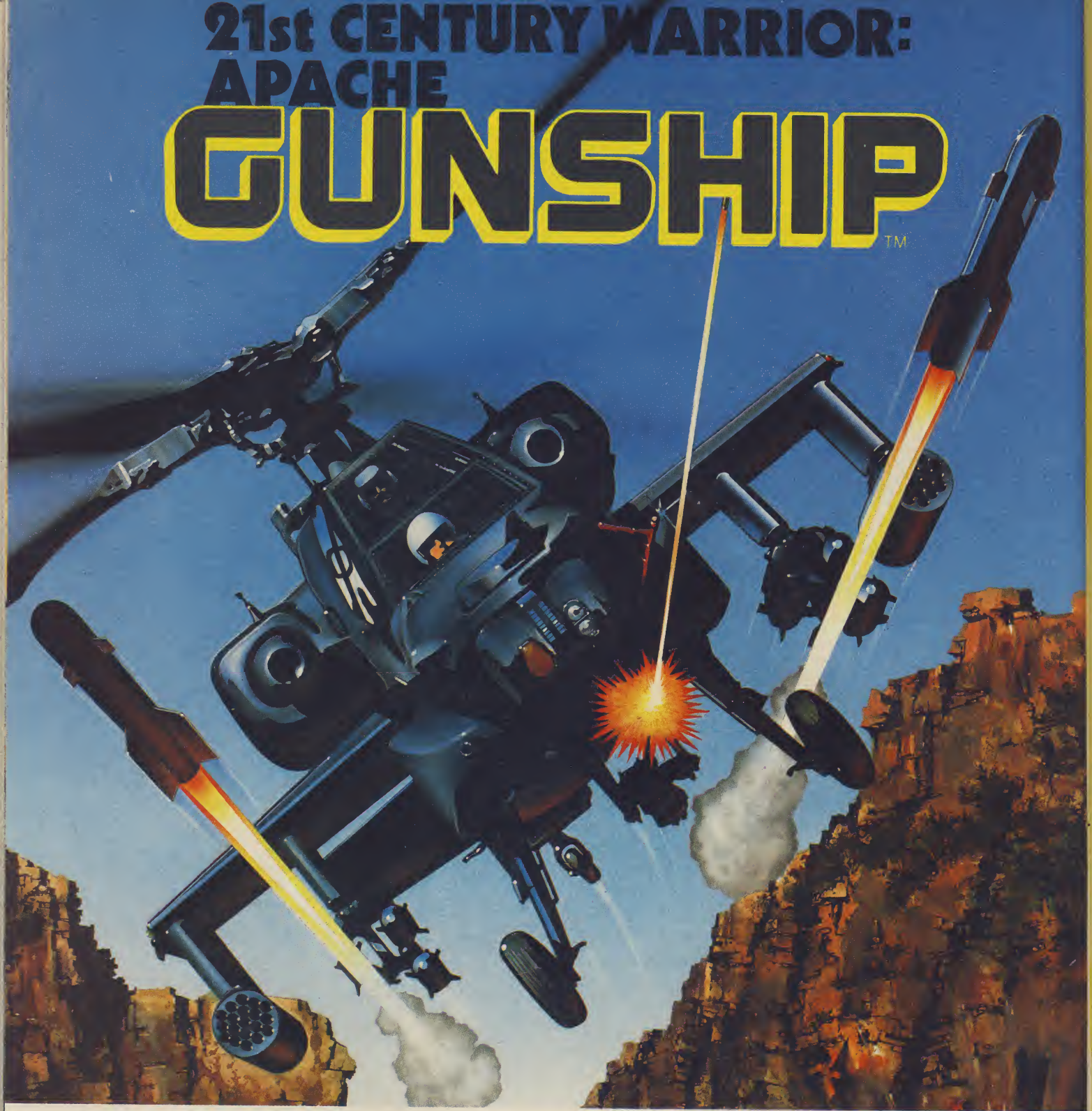

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FRONTLINE

with Philippa Irving

READ ALL ABOUT IT

There's been an alarming slump in the number of wargames finding their way to my garret in north Oxford. Either all those brave people who write wargames and expose themselves to my sarcasm have decided to go on holiday, or the Post Office has eaten the parcel containing them . . .

A couple of months ago I explained my ratings system in detail in Manoeuvres, my column in CRASH's Commodore sister ZZAP! 64, and it seems fair that I should do the same in Frontline.

Ratings very artificial, and quite unscientific; but they are the accepted way of summing up impressions in the world of computer-game reviews, and a percentage breakdown system such as CRASH uses is a lot more accurate and interesting than just giving single figures. This is the way I think about each rating:

Presentation is sometimes difficult to disentangle from Graphics, but in theory it covers every aspect of the game except the game. The packaging, the ease with which orders can be given, and the general aesthetic impression the screen display gives are all considered. Presentation isn't everything in a strategy game, but just as an exam candidate with neat handwriting is more likely to get a sympathetic marker than an illegible scrawler, a tidy and professional appearance makes an immediate impression on consumers and reviewers.

Graphics in wargames are always a compromise. They can rarely do as much to conjure up an atmosphere as arcade graphics can, and have to be content with being representational. But this doesn't mean that well-drawn and clearly-set-out graphics can't improve a wargame.

Rules are extremely important in a wargame, particularly a historical one. It isn't so much the case with Spectrum wargames, but some Commodore games are virtually rulebooks with a bit of computer animation. I always commend historical material and complain about its absence. It's important that if the game structure is complex it should be explained in sequential and idiot-proof detail, and personally I like to see the game mechanics exposed – though other people don't.

Authenticity: taken with any literalness, no wargame is particularly authentic. If you think about it, you wouldn't really want it to be – all the blood and dead bodies and deafening shells and gunfire would not be entertaining. But games can create their own atmosphere, and the player can feel involved in the world the game reflects. It's the equivalent of our willing suspension of disbelief when watching drama, and it helps, of course, if there are no obvious factual blunders or intrusive bits of gameplay.

Playability: all computer gamers know what playability is. It's the quality that stops you pressing the reset switch, or pulling out the power lead if you're still running a rubber model. It's the quality that can have you zapping or collecting or assault-breaking into the early hours. Though wargames, like adventures, are more sedate and detached than arcade shoot-'em-ups, you can still find seven hours slipping by undetected if you get involved in a really playable game. Playability can be disrupted by the smallest things, such as computer-opponent turns which take just a little too long and or scrolling menus which are just slightly too complex to work. A lot of shallow and dead-end games can be quite playable at first, and I comment on that honestly.

Overall: a game can be greater than the sum of its parts, and I don't feel that the Overall percentage rating has to be a cocktail of the preceding ratings. Beautiful graphics or badly-produced rules may be irrelevant if the game itself is a turkey or a classic.

The ratings are only my personal assessment. In the main body of the reviews I try to be as descriptive as possible so you can decide, irrespective of what final percentage it gets, whether you want to buy the game or not.

ROUNDHEADS

Producer: **Lothlorien**
Price: **£9.95**

► *Horace Goes Skiing* **in the 17th century?**

This is the first wargame I've seen based on the English Civil War of the 1640s, which seems odd when you consider how popular a subject this is with 'live' wargamers; battles between the Roundheads and Cavaliers are re-enacted every summer by enthusiasts who delight to dress up in period military gear and fight it out in the name of a long-dead cause. *Roundheads* is an attempt to condense the entire period into a Spectrum.

In October 1642, the English Civil War broke out between the Cavalier forces of King Charles I and the Parliamentary army led by the Earl Of Essex. My history is usually abysmal (an essential qualification for a wargame reviewer, for at least I can tell if a game has taught me anything . . .) but I do know that Oxford was the Royalist capital during the war and that King Charles lodged in Christchurch college.

All the major cities in England had been forced to choose sides, and the very brief scene-setting paragraph in the *Roundheads* rulebook says that as the game starts the Parliamentary forces – known as Roundheads – have their greatest support in the south and east. They are also negotiating for Scottish support, which they appear to get. Up and down the country peasants have been turning their pitchforks into weapons, leaving their fields, and rallying behind one cause or the other. This has not done much for the country's agricultural stability, and food supplies are restricted to what the passing troops can forage.

Roundheads ambitiously attempts to recreate the entire war at both tactical and strategic levels. You can move whole armies up and down the country,

BRIEFING

Have any of you out there *ever* played *any* game other than *Chaos*? Tips for Games Workshop's apparently never-to-be-forgotten classic, reviewed in CRASH Issue 16, seem to account for half the mail Briefing receives – but this month's column is ABSOLUTELY THE LAST WORD on *Chaos*! *(She says - Ed)*

James S Smith of Dumbarton in west Scotland suggests some unusual ways of using the spells. If you've just killed an opponent, stand one of your own creatures on the same space and cast Vengeance, Decree, or Justice Of Dark power on it. If the spell works, your creature will be transfigured into a remarkable likeness of the recently-slain opponent. This sounds like a bug!

Gooey blobs also can be used in ways which nature never intended. Cast an illusionary creature, and allow it to be covered by a gooey blob. When the creature is freed, it is disillusioned. In *Chaos* this is a good thing.

If you mount a resurrected horse, pegasus or manticore, you become an undead creature. But entering a magic wood, magic castle or dark citadel loses you this undead status.

Ian Day of Preston in Lancashire describes how to get hold of a dramatic spell called Turmoil, which works every time and moves everything around the screen – sometimes with fatal results. It can only be found in a magic wood, and can only be taken if you're in a tree. And be patient – the Turmoil spell only appears every hundred turns or so.

Moving on to that other venerable classic *Theatre Europe* (PSS), which has recently been rereleased as part of *Conflicts 1* (reviews: Issue 29 and 42 respectively), **Paul Hindle** of Lancing in Sussex makes the following suggestions:

Never ever launch more than two nuclear strikes in a game.

Never turn on the reflex system.

Don't let the computer choose enemy cities as nuclear targets. Enemy armies make much better victims.

Chemical strikes are pointless – they adversely affect your end-of-game rating, and you run the risk of nuclear response.

Play as NATO, because if the computer plays NATO it doesn't fight back!

Finally, a plea from **M Berry** of North Bridgend in Wales: 'Has anyone got a poke to stop the whistling noise the artillery makes during *Arnhem*? It's driving me up the wall!'

THE BEST OF ENEMIES . . .

Dear Philippa

On the subject of opponents in computer wargames, I feel I should write about *Vulcan*. I do not claim to be experienced at playing wargames, having only six to my credit, but I feel that the computer-controlled opponents in these games lack a certain quality.

In *Vulcan* I would accuse 'him' of not checking his reports to see if his units are capable of receiving supplies or attacking. On selecting the two-player option from the set-up menu, I find many of his units without supplies, or extremely weak.

Knowing this failing in his skill as a General, I have managed, as the Axis player, on separate occasions to wipe out the cutting down cornfields on the way; or you can fight single battles with small forces. The two phases of the game demonstrate how different reality scales affect wargaming, and it's interesting to see a combination of the grand and the detailed. This feature distinguishes an otherwise unremarkable game.

On the strategic level, the screen presents a map of England which is featureless apart from the noughts and crosses of the opposing armies. In the one-player game you have to be on the side of the King, which gives you a slight advantage at first; the Cavalier armies are better-trained and slightly stronger than the Roundheads. But the Scots soon come marching south to aid the enemy, so the rules advise the player to make the most of his superiority.

Incidentally, the lack of choice of sides in the one-player game makes the title *Roundheads* seem a little inappropriate, and because Roundheads And Cavaliers appears on the bottom of the screen I suspect there was a last-minute title change.

The player has command of two types of armies at the strategic level; real armies and 'trained bands'. These latter consist of the peasants-turned-warriors and other loyal or rebellious citizens from the towns, rounded up into some sort of fighting force. They can be used in battle, but they're not particularly reliable and tend to desert if they're moved too far from home or think the odds against them are too great.

The rulebook illustrates what the Roundhead armies and trained bands look like, but neglect to make the distinction between their Royalist equivalents. One has to guess. My guess was that the large round blobs were the armies, and the smaller squares the trained bands. Confusingly, the instructions refer to the units as 'icons'. This may be a strictly correct use of the word, but it's certainly incorrect in the context of a computer game where 'icon' is always used to mean a control symbol. Here, the control system is a simple cursor-selection, which allows the player to move armies speedily. As the armies move they gather food points, which doesn't make sense; after all, wargamers are more accustomed to armies consuming food and resource points by moving. A food riot can therefore be quelled by sending the troops on a quick back-and-forth trip across the countryside.

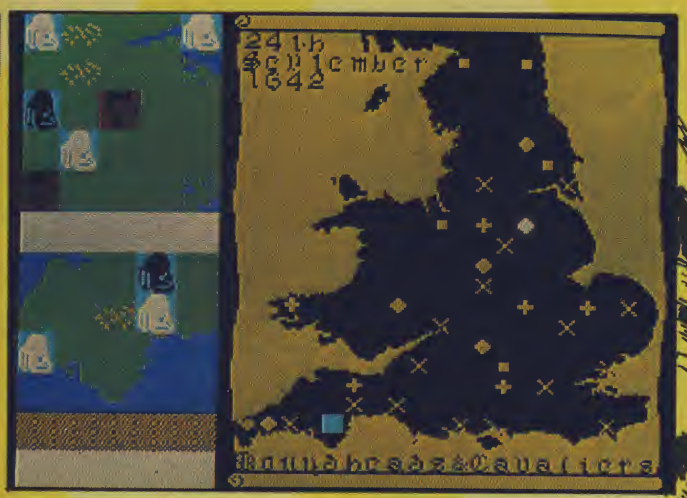
As the cursor is moved around the main map a window at the side of the screen scrolls neatly, showing a blow-up of the area currently under the cursor. The side window also displays more attractive versions of the army counters, with the Royalist army represented as crowned heads and the Roundheads looking like genially smiling grandfathers. This *seems* more useful than it is.

The close-up map doesn't actually show any extra detail apart from mysterious little houses, invisible on the main map, which may be intended to indicate cities. It's difficult to tell, for the rules make no mention of them. There is no way of telling which towns and cities are where, something I regard as very unatmospheric. If there was no room on the screen display there ought to have been a map in the rules to give a bit of colour and structure to the landscape . . .

The armies and trained bands are defined only by their strength and the amount of food they carry. It would have improved the coherence of the game immensely if the armies had been identified, even in the most rudimentary way. As it is, there is nothing to give them character and imaginative life, and even if dire consequences do follow moving a trained band too far from its place of origin it's not easy to keep track of where each bunch of pickaxe-waving peasants ought to be.

This is a pity, because in the tactical-level battles there's a great opportunity to tie the two Northern Allied units and the Eighth Army. The former was done without moving more than the Centauro division from the south. The 15th and 21st Panzer divisions held the entire English army at bay by fortifying behind a wadi for eight days. As the Allied units I have managed to win 'The Tunisian Campaign' in only eight days!

Hidden movement could prove to be an extremely important factor in improving computer opponents. I hope R T Smith does not miss this worthwhile feature out of his next game because of what A M Wright said in CRASH Issue 42. this month. Being unable to see the enemy leaves the element of surprise. I have frequently travelled along a road



► **Rough edges spoil an imaginative concept in** *Roundheads*

strands together. When you've moved your armies around an isolated, defenceless enemy unit you can choose to enter the tactical level, and the screen display changes entirely to show a battlefield. This, quite cleverly, bears a clear relationship to the landscape on the main map; though the scale is quite wrong, for you find yourself battling all the way across the westernmost tip of Cornwall. The combat is grandly entitled the Battle Of York, or the Battle Of London, or the Battle of wherever you've decided to bash a few Roundheads. That's a fine touch, but it's offset by more basic deficiencies of detail.

Though the strategic-level display is reasonably polished, the battlefield is a masterpiece of primitive-style Spectrum and looks like it's been drawn in crayon. The background is a glaring blank, the infantry units are matchstick men, and the four terrain types are represented very simplistically. It is, unfortunately, strongly reminiscent of those extremely early Spectrum games like *Horace Goes Skiing*.

The number of red matchstick men the player finds opposing the Roundhead blue matchstick men is related to the strength and number of armies he had ranged against the enemy in the map on the strategic level, and there's something curiously satisfying about this. According to the rules the units are distributed randomly, though they always start out in clusters of their own kind.

Infantry, cavalry and artillery make up the fighting force, with the unexpected addition of supply wagons. I assume that the supply wagons are intended to represent the army's food stock – that vital statistic displayed in the strategic map – but I see no reason why they should be taken onto the battlefield, unless the troops are supposed to refresh themselves with sandwiches and cups of tea during slack phases in the fighting. Really, they're there to provide something vulnerable to attack and defend, and if you see that you're hopelessly outnumbered it's a good idea to make straight for the enemy's food wagons and destroy as many of them as you can before you get wiped out.

Orders are given to individual units with a cursor, in an unsophisticated fashion. It is difficult to extract from the rules a clear understanding of how the combat really works. It seems you can give each unit a single order to attack and then watch as it carries out the order, following the target if it moves.

This doesn't seem to work in practice. I found the only sure way to make an attack was to specify each one individually, and because this is a game played in real time the old problems arise; you can only deal with one unit at one time. To be fair, the number of units involved are small enough to be manageable, though this style of frantic, cursor-hopping play does destroy the atmosphere. As each attack is made, the 'before and after' strength of each unit is flashed at the bottom of the screen.

Strength units tend to be chipped off at the rate of one per unit, with only minor and not very predictable variations. Even artillery units firing at long range lose a strength point when they make an attack, and this seems illogical to me. I was disconcerted to discover that my food wagons made pretty invincible fighting machines when I tried to attack with them; either the rock buns are pretty old, or there's a bug in the program. The enemy's food wagons are easy to destroy.

There is some variety in the play of the battle scenes. The 'defensible area' type of terrain allows infantry to shelter from attack, and though the woods and hills seem to have no effect on combat it's impossible to move across rivers. And, like all simplistic games, *Roundheads* has a degree of tacky addictiveness.

The battle lasts as long as it takes for one side to eliminate the other, or till you choose to exit from it. The instructions claim that you can only do this after 15 minutes, but this is incorrect; maybe it's a misprint for '5 minutes'. When you're returned to the strategic screen the appropriate army counter has disappeared and the attacking forces are depleted according to the losses suffered. This is where I feel a sense of involvement could be generated by giving the units names, names carried over to the individual divisions in the battle scenes. It would be satisfying to know which divisions belong to which army, which are trained soldiers and which are volunteer rabble. The distinction vanishes into anonymity at the tactical level.

There are several irritating points of presentation. The rules are vague and confusing. The instructions on giving orders are ambiguous, the Cavalier unit symbols aren't shown, and there's no warning that the game has to be reloaded if you want to start again. The game is artificially slowed down by the rule which insists that three minutes must separate each entry to tactical battle, a restraint which seems to be designed to make the two-player game fairer. In the one-player version it's simply irritating.

Roundheads isn't as bad as it looks; I enjoyed it up to a point, and see the potential of some of the things it tries to do. But there's a lack of detail, depth, atmosphere and – somehow – solidity, deficiencies which are all too common in Spectrum wargames.

Presentation 70%
It's reasonably polished in places, and the orders system is so simplistic that it would be hard to make it cumbersome

Graphics 60%
The strategic-level map is presentable if unimaginative. The tactical map, though serving its functions, is in the *Horace Goes Skiing* school of Spectrum art

Rules 50%
Hardly voluminous, considering the potential of the historical subject, and bordering on the inadequate

Authenticity 55%
Real-time setting destroys the atmosphere, and lack of geographical information and unit names doesn't help

Playability 70%
Certainly easy to get into, and smoothly-flowing

Overall 59%
Some interesting features, but missable

and suffered heavy losses from a concealed unit. I also enjoy leaving one or two weak Italian divisions in the bottom southeast of the map ready to cut the supplies of an overambitious Eighth Army.

To improve the enemy opponent, in *Vulcan* at least, I would suggest two possibilities. First, the computer should check his own reports, and second, difficulty levels could be introduced by which the computer cheats to different degrees. He could examine both your units' positions and their reports, thereby being able to plan his attacks to greater effort. To counterbalance this there should be an option to play the computer with open movement.

You have dropped the opponent rating. It seems a sensible move as it is impractical to hope to assess an AI routine in a week when you have so many other things to do. You could, however, publish an opponent rating in a subsequent issue if you have found the time to assess a game more thoroughly.

A G Popkin, Haywards Heath

Unfortunately I rarely have the time to return to a game once I've taken it apart for review. I'm too busy grappling with the next batch!

PI

NOT A PENNY MORE . . .

I've had a letter from ***Roger King****, who's trying to establish a magazine for Spectrum wargames; he plans to include reviews, previews, interviews and competitions. He desperately wants to hear from people interested in contributing, and from anyone who could let him use a photocopier for under a penny a sheet. Contact Roger at* 46 Bury Lane, Datchworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6ST – *and keep watch on FRONTLINE and FANZINE FILE for progress reports.*

ALL TOGETHER NOW

PAUL SUMNER reviews the latest compilations – there's gold in them thar software shelves, if you know where to look

EVER SINCE the Spectrum stormed into the homes of young innocent children, compilations of previously released games have been lurking on the software shelves. From the outset compilations were purchased for quantity more than quality – the largest collections seemed to give more value for money, more games per pound. But as buyers became more prudent software houses found themselves having to be more selective in what they put on their cassettes.

THE BUDGET MARKET has just got into compilations, with two distinct approaches. On the one hand you have The Power House throwing together most of their £1.99 releases, past and present, in a bundle of budget fun – ***Powerplays***, eight games for £9.99. None of the games are very impressive, the point being quantity rather than quality. On the other hand you have Tynesoft looking at the budget problem from a completely different angle: in the ***Micro Value Pack*** you only get four (very old and not very good) games, but for the extremely cheap compilation price of £3.99.

No longer are compilations just collections of rejected old games. With the growing importance of budget software in the sales charts (see our feature on page 45), most compilations are now slickly-presented and well-advertised packages proclaiming *value for money*. Most software houses have even set up departments which scour the market for games to go on compilations.

YOU MIGHT THINK summer is all over now, but in attempt to brighten up everyone's lives US Gold has released *Summer Gold*. In true US Gold style this latest bundle of fun offers a wide range of games, from old favourites like *Bruce* (How many times did you complete it?) *Lee* and *Beach Head II* to recent simulations: *Tenth Frame* and *Dambusters*. And, like The Edge, US Gold throws in an adventure, *Rebel Planet*, to counter the aggressive bashing and blasting of the arcade games. There's nothing really bad in *Summer Gold* – what you've got is six respectable full-price games for £8.99.

With the supposed summer software slump now past, a whole plethora of compilations is about to be released to satisfy our appetite in the dull time between *The PCW Show* and Christmas.

This collection of compilations shows the dilemma facing the buyer on the high street. Should you go for a great big bundle of software that you've never heard of? Or is it better to play safe with compilations of well-established oldies?

ACTIVISION is also getting in on the bundle bonanza with a *Lucasfilm Prestige Compilation* (see the CRASH offer on page 62 . . .). Out of all four games *The Eidolon* (on yet another compilation) is probably the best piece; the other three suffer badly from conversionitis caught from the Commodore.

AFTER the success of *Star Games*, Gremlin Graphics has quickly hit the streets with ***Star Games II***. Now part of the US Gold conglomerate, Gremlin offers old favourites such as the very popular *Highway Encounter* (originally from Vortex) along with another CRASH Smash, Ultimate's *Cyberun*. On the same tape, in the shadow of these two giants, can be found a couple of Lucasfilm games *Ballblazer* and *The Eidolon*. Of course Gremlin also gets a look-in with the underrated and very playable *Trailblazer* and their Gauntlet clone *Avenger*.

My advice is to stick with well-known titles; at least that way you won't buy a package with any really rancid games. And whatever you do don't discard a compilation just because it contains a few golden oldies – they're often more playable than new games for which more time has been spent on presentation than on content.

If you're going out to buy a particular game, it's worth looking around on the compilations first. Most full-price games reach their peak sales within a few weeks, so within a few months they can be on compilations, where their sales will be steadier. If you're really shrewd you could give up buying individual games altogether, and just get the hits all in one package – though this way you tend to be about six months behind the rest of the software scene. Have a good look around, there's bound to be a compilation for you somewhere.

Note: the information boxes on this page give each game's original CRASH Overall percentage and then the issue in which it was reviewed. N/R means the game was not reviewed in CRASH.

IF YOU LIKE life on The Edge, you'd better not miss ***Classix 1***. This 'collector's edition' brings together all Softek's and The Edge's hits since they first entered the Spectrum software scene in 1984. The star of the package is without a doubt *Bobby Bearing*; in this 3-D *Marble Madness*-type game, the eponymous cute little ball of fun has to rescue his mates. This little wonder picked up nearly every computer award available and makes the package immense value for money. Also hidden away on *Classix 1* is The Edge's first adventure, *That's The Spirit*. It's not often we see adventures on compilations, but maybe *Classix 1* has something for everyone . . .

FOLLOWING in the path of *Soft Aid* and *Off The Hook*, which raised £350,000 and £75,000 for their respective charities, a new label called Backpack releases ***Kidsplay*** in midautumn and looks set to follow its predecessors. The worthy charity this time is the National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children, which will use the profits to combat child abuse (see the news piece in CRASH Issue 43). The contents range from the 1984 Ultimate success *Lunar Jetman* to hits of 1987 like *Xeno*, *Deactivators* and *Mailstrom*. Nine of the ten games scored over 85% in CRASH – so *Kidsplay* gives you excellent value for money while helping a deserving cause.

OCEAN'S big release for autumn looks set to start a completely new trend in theme compilations. Covering nearly every conceivable sport, ***Game Set And Match*** brings together ten of the most popular recreational simulations released in the Spectrum's lifetime (in fact, 23 if you count the subgames in *Daley Thompson's Supertest* and *Hyper Sports*). The only surprise is the inclusion of *Super Soccer* over the far superior *Match Day* (because so many of you have already got the latter, I'm told). The package includes three CRASH Smashes and two which were very near misses. So whatever you fancy (in the way of sport!) Ocean seems to have got it covered. This lavish package of four cassettes should be at your local sports centre . . . umm, computer shop now at the reasonable price of £12.95. And if you've got a +3 you can get a two-disk package for £17.95 (much less than a season ticket to Leeds).

KIDSPLAY
Backpack

Xeno	86% 35
Deactivators	85% 34
Night Gunner	91% 3
Marsport	95% 22
Monty On The Run	94% 20
Starion	94% 16
Mailstrom	59% 35
Starstrike	93% 11
Bounty Bob	85% 21
Lunar Jetman	95% 1
	£9.99

STAR GAMES II
Gremlin

Highway Encounter	95% 20
Cyberun	90% 28
Trailblazer	88% 34
Avenger	85% 36
Ballblazer	71% 28
Eidolon	76% 36
	£9.99

GAME SET AND MATCH
Ocean

GBA Basketball	37% 44
Konami's Tennis	60% 33
Super Soccer	56% 37
Daley Thompson's Supertest	76% 22
Barry McGuigan's Boxing	88% 25
CDS Pool	77% 6
Ping Pong	90% 28
World Series Baseball	91% 16
Jonah Barrington's Squash	87% 17
Hyper Sports	92% 19
	box of four cassettes £12.95
	two Spectrum +3 disks £17.95

POWERPLAYS
The Power House

Hercules	N/R
Slingshot	N/R
Time Flight	29% 40
Cyrox	46% 40
Squidge	N/R
Odd Ball	N/R
Sword & Shield	N/R
Tomb Of Syrinx	26% 40
	£9.99

MICRO VALUE PACK
Tynesoft

Panzadrome	77% 24
Tidy Tony	N/R
BB Strikes Back	42% 23
Steelyard Blues	N/R
	£3.99

CLASSIX 1
The Edge

Bobby Bearing	94% 31
Brian Bloodaxe	86% 14
Starbike	77% 10
Psytraxx	69% 10
That's The Spirit	N/R
	£8.95

SUMMER GOLD
US Gold

Tenth Frame	55% 38
Impossible Mission	76% 22
Rebel Planet	85% 31
Dambusters	75% 21
Bruce Lee	91% 16
Beach Head II	74% 24
	£8.99

LUCASFILM PRESTIGE COMPILATIONS
Activision

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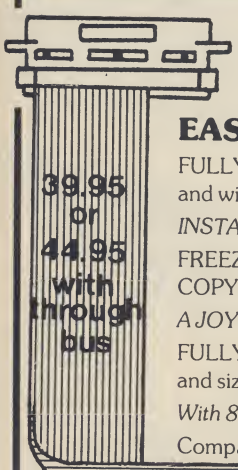

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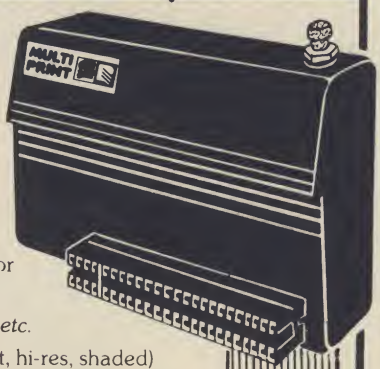

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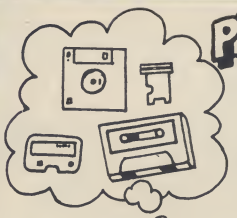

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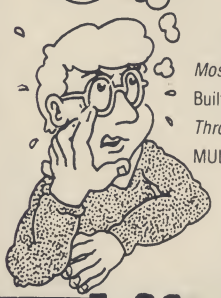

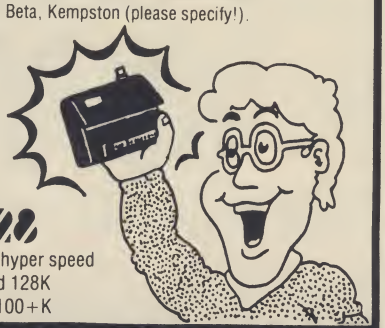

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the Crash Charts

TOP GAMES OCTOBER

The three charts compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games – it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms which live on the results pages and in FRONTLINE to make your voice heard.

If you don't want to carve up your issue of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy the details from the voting forms onto a postcard, or the back of a sealed envelope, and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your vote, there's always the chance of winning a prize. Each month we draw 15 winners from all the voting forms received – five for the HOTLINE, five for the ADVENTURE and five for the STRATEGY chart.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T-shirt is awarded to the first slip drawn from the HOTLINE votes, and another £40 of goodies and a shirt goes to the ADVENTURE and £20 of goodies and a shirt goes to the STRATEGY

Four runners up from each ballot box collect a CRASH T-shirt and a CRASH Hat. So get those votes in to the **CRASH HOTLINE CHART**, **CRASH ADVENTURE CHART** and **CRASH STRATEGY CHART**: ***PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.***

Not much movement in the chart this lazy summer, with nothing new above Number 15; the heat's got to *Cobra* and *Paper Boy*, though, and they've both collapsed. Note the new (▶) sign before the Issue 42 Smash *Zynaps* – this indicates that the game has NEVER been in the chart before, whereas (-) just means it wasn't there last month. Ocean drowns the other software houses with almost a third of this month's Hotline titles, but US Gold's *Gauntlet* is still at the top for the seventh successive month . . .

This month's £40 worth of software (plus the usual T-shirt) goes to* Chas Ault *of Eccles near Manchester; runners-up are* C J Wright *of Wirral on Merseyside,* Eric Stewart *from the Isle Of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides and* James Titheridge *of Chandlers Ford in Hampshire.

Strategy Top 10

1 (1)	VULCAN	CCS
2 (2)	REBELSTAR RAIDERS	FIREBIRD
3 (5)	ARNHEM	CCS
4 (3)	THEATRE EUROPE	PSS
5 (-)	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND
6 (8)	TOBRUK	PSS
7 (9)	BATTLE OF BRITAIN	PSS
8 (-)	THEIR FINEST HOUR	CENTURY
9 (-)	GALLIPOLI	CCS
10 (4)	DESERT RATS	CCS

There's been a huge volley of votes for the Strategy Top Ten, reports a Charts Minion on the scene – interestingly, though, the strategists seem to share opinions, and there have been only 14 different titles listed in three months of the chart. CCS's *Vulcan* and Firebird's *Rebelstar Raiders* have held the top since the beginning.

First out of the upturned helmet was* Matthew Verry *of Dartford in Kent; runners-up are* Iain Turner *of Southend-On-Sea in Essex,* David Brown *of Stanford-le-Hope, also in Essex,* Stephen A Graham *of Carlisle,* Mark Lawton *of Stoke-On-Trent in Staffordshire and* Ian King *of Tipton in the West Midlands.

Hotline Top 20

1 (1)	GAUNTLET	US GOLD
2 (5)	HEAD OVER HEELS	OCEAN
3 (3)	ENDURO RACER	ACTIVISION
4 (6)	URIDIUM	HEWSON
5 (7)	ELITE	FIREBIRD
6 (9)	MATCH DAY	OCEAN
7 (12)	BOMBJACK	ELITE
8 (2)	PAPER BOY	ELITE
9 (16)	BARBARIAN	PALACE
10 (4)	COBRA	OCEAN
11 (8)	ARKANOID	OCEAN
12 (19)	THE SENTINEL	FIREBIRD
13 (17)	ALIENS	ELECTRIC DREAMS
14 (11)	STARGLIDER	RAINBIRD
15 (-)	THE GREAT ESCAPE	OCEAN
16 (10)	FEUD	MASTERTRONIC
17 (▶)	ZYNAPS	HEWSON
18 (-)	BATMAN	OCEAN
19 (-)	GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS	ELITE
20 (-)	AUF WIEDERSEHEN M.	GREMLIN GRAPHICS

The Hobbit makes it to Number One, where its parody *The Boggit* was in Issue 40. But darkness is closing in on *Fairlight II*, and *Spellbound* looks like slipping back down to third place, whence it rose to the top last month.

David Barrows *of Northampton is the big winner, but don't forget these other adventurers:* James Cooper *of Newbury in Berkshire,* Chris Beck *of Rotherham in South Yorkshire,* Allan Price *of Leeds, and* Peter Chessman *of Waterlooville in Hampshire, who met his Waterloo trying to find the voting form – presumably in Issue 43 where, sorry, we left it out. (Lloyd getting too much space for the Forum again . . .)*

Adventure Top 20

1 (2)	THE HOBBIT	MELBOURNE HOUSE
2 (4)	HEAVY ON THE MAGICK	GARGOYLE GAMES
3 (1)	SPELLBOUND	M.A.D.
4 (3)	KNIGHT TYME	M.A.D.
5 (5)	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	BEYOND
6 (11)	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND
7 (8)	THE BOGGIT	CRL
8 (-)	BORED OF THE RINGS	CRL
9 (10)	LORD OF THE RINGS	MELBOURNE HOUSE
10 (-)	FOURTH PROTOCOL	CENTURY HUTCHINSON
11 (13)	GREMLINS	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
12 (6)	STORMBRINGER	M.A.D.
13 (17)	SHADOWFIRE	BEYOND
14 (7)	RED MOON	LEVEL 9
15 (16)	THE PRICE OF MAGIK	LEVEL 9
16 (-)	MARSPORT	GARGOYLE GAMES
17 (-)	NEVER ENDING STORY	OCEAN
18 (9)	FAIRLIGHT II	THE EDGE
19 (12)	DRACULA	CRL
20 (-)	DUN DARACH	GARGOYLE GAMES

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1987 PBM MAILBOX

Aloha, and welcome once more to the wondrous hobby of play-by-mail gaming with BRENDON KAVANAGH. 'So,' you ask, 'what has happened in the PBM world this month?' (Well, it's one way of making conversation.) The answer: there's a special feature on KJC Games's . . .

EARTHWOOD HINTS AND TIPS

MATTHEW AYRES from Southminster in Essex has sent some basic tips for new *Earthwood* players. Matthew was a joint winner at the end of *Earthwood 20* and comments that though he enjoyed the game there is definitely room for improvement.

According to Matthew, the game's biggest letdowns are its map and the lack of extra features in the endgame.

Anyway, on with the tips . . .

1 Never forget that 'the pen is mightier than the sword' – also bear in mind that one cannot function properly without the other!

2 Of *Earthwood*'s 35 cities, only 17 are inhabited at the start of the game.

3 Player characters should try to ally themselves with a nearby race to share cities in the area.

4 The best cities are those near the edge of the map with high food production. If possible, secure a group or 'cornerfull' of cities; cities not on the front line can support those that are.

5 Most city tactics are unfavourable to the defender, so concentrate your forces in tight, strong groups wherever possible.

6 With a bit of forethought you can predict where you might encounter Non-Player Characters (NPCs) – for example, tree fairies in woodlands . . .

7 The secrets of success are good diplomacy and control of cities. As most recruiting is done from cities (and they are the only suppliers of food and gold), they are vital if you don't have any good alliance ties.

8 Take an active part in the game. Players who ignore diplomacy or are totally impassive invariably drop out (or are knocked out) because there's no excitement for them.

Thanks a lot, Matthew. Has anyone else got tips for games not yet covered in PBM Mailbox? Send them in!

EARTHWOOD

EARTHWOOD may be vaguely known to CRASH readers; it's the fantasy game upon which Jade Games is accused of basing its defunct *Arcadia.* But KJC Games's *Earthwood* is well-established.

It caters for 25 players. The player takes a role (King or Wizard, perhaps) – and, as in most games, what you are affects what you can and cannot do.

Besides your main character, you have control over three independent groups of creatures; your character must always be with one of these groups, and you're kept aware of what's happening to the other two.

The game is set on a large map with 35 cities. The object is to use your groups and your powers (magical and diplomatic) to gain control over the majority of the cities. This is done by a mixture of exploring, spying, trading, fighting and avoiding monsters!

Earthwood is computer-moderated and seems quite popular. Each game should last 18 months (according to KJC Games) – provided you're not knocked out earlier!

Startup costs £5, for which you receive the rulebook, setup and the first three turns. Each turn thereafter costs £1.50.

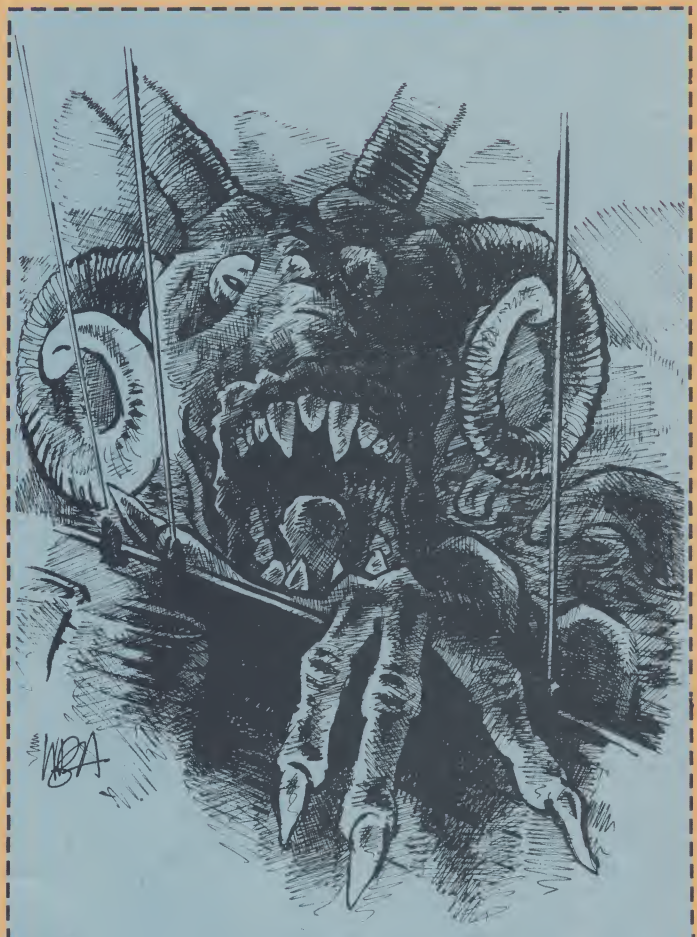
Write to KJC Games at *5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancashire FY5 2BD.*

SPECIAL OFFER

A NEW VERSION of *Earthwood*, called *Earthwood – The Sea Kings*, will be launched on October 1 1987. This will be a naval version of the old game, replacing cities with islands in a big sea infested with monsters and Non-Player Characters!

Anyone new to EITHER *Earthwood* game can use this CRASH voucher with their first payment to claim two extra free turns – so that's setup, the rulebook, and five turns for a fiver.

Don't forget to tell KJC Games whether you're starting *Earthwood* or *Earthwood – The Sea Kings*!



Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

This special voucher from Issue 45 of CRASH entitles a new player in KJC Games's Earthwood *or* Earthwood – The Sea Kings *to two extra free turns – in addition to the setup, rulebook and three free turns you get for your £5.*

Just send this voucher (the original, please, not a photocopy!) in with your application and startup fee.

The offer is valid as long as the voucher is received by KJC Games on or before November 23, and needless to add only one voucher may be applied to each startup (otherwise Guru Denise would be playing free for 18 months . . .)

PBM NEWS

NEWTY BUT NICE

STEVE NEWTON of Newty Games is seeking a new GM for his game *Faction Magician*, covered in CRASH Issue 41. He writes: 'We are in dire need of another GM (the response from your article was quite incredible, which has helped lead to our current overstretched situation, so I hold YOU responsible (!)). The pay ain't great, but it'll buy a beer or six on a Saturday night down the pub and it's great fun. I'd be grateful if you'd send out this plea to the populace and ask those interested to drop me a line with a few details about themselves.

'Our turnaround time has doubled – some of our players are having to wait up to ten days for their reply, so any help would be appreciated . . . '

If you have the time, inclination and commitment to GM a game of *Faction Magician* then drop a line to Steve.

Faction Magician has a new address: *Druids Cottage, Carn Brea Villages, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 3BL.*

But PLEASE bear in mind that there's a lot of responsibility involved in GMing a game!

IT'S AN ORGANISED CRIME!

NAB SOFTWARE, GMs of *Aegyptus* (an involved US game based upon ancient life – review coming soon(er or later)), has imported another game from the Yanks. *Family Wars* is set in American cities during the Twenties and Thirties. Players become 'kingpins' in a crime family, and you have to control your own turf while expanding your territory and influence in the political arena.

Alliances are possible, though different victory conditions then apply.

Family Wars sounds a bit like *It's A Crime!* with knobs on; I'll give it an overview in CRASH in a few months' time, when I've seen the rulebook.

NAB's Nick Barnett points out that the game is entirely computer-moderated and should last for between 40 and 50 turns. He hopes to offer three turnaround schedules (weekly, fortnightly and three-weekly) at different rates. Thus a game could continue for between one and three years.

For further details, write to NAB Software at *7 Oakwood Drive, Aspley, Nottingham NG8 3LZ.*

NOVA GEN

I'VE RECEIVED lots of letters wondering what's happened to *Conquest* – it seems turn reports suddenly stopped arriving, without explanation. Well, DON'T PANIC!!!

In this month's mailbag was a letter from a new company called Nova Productions. Nova has taken over the management of *Conquest* from Conquest Games, and has been operating a supposedly improved version since June!

According to Nova's Laurence Norman, the original version of *Conquest* was too complex and time-consuming. Steve Brunt wisely redesigned it, but failed to playtest the new version. Result? Numerous rule changes and an unreliable turnaround.

So Nova has redesigned some areas of the game to make it more playable, and improved turnaround to one or two weeks in the process. Future developments could well include computer moderation . . .

A *Conquest* startup now costs £4, and the turn charge is £1.50 with no extras. I'm curious to see how the game has changed, so I'm starting up very soon; while waiting for a PBM Mailbox report, you can contact Nova Productions at *PO Box 685, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SX.*

► ***Conquest*'s new-style computer-generated turnsheets are a great improvement on the old handwritten ones. The map's impressive, too!**

PBM FORUM

A POSTCODE WRITES

Dear Brendon
After a bit of indecision, I finally joined this band of half-crazed psychopathic megalomaniacs you call PBMers. I am now enjoying *Vorcon Wars 84*. Thank you.

But I have a grumble. If our turns are late, do we have any comeback to the Post Office? For example, my turnsheets sent from Bracknell have thrice been repostmarked; once Dundee, once Perth *(what? Australia? - BK)* and once York. Dundee and Perth I can understand, but since when was York in Scotland *(Oh - BK)*?

I could understand these troubles if there was no postcode, but since PA38 4BY is unique to Kentallen (where I live), and is printed on all of my turnsheets, I am a little confused.

I don't know if it happens in the other direction, but I bet it does.

Is there anything I can do? It don't 'arf slow things down. I actually missed the first turn of Game 100 because I was cheapskate and used second class . . .

Angus Garfield Rae
Appin, Argyll
Scotland

A sad tale – but are we really only HALF-crazed?

If I were you I'd send my mail by recorded delivery. It'll cost you an extra 20p for each letter, but it's worth it for the peace of mind. There is no insurance offered for cash enclosed in your letter, but at least the Post Office guarantees delivery. Your only other option is to deliver it personally – a touch impractical, I suppose.

BK

WE STAND TOGETHER

Dear Brendon
After receiving my *It's A Crime!* results sheet I noticed that Game 14 is the official *C&VG* game! Apparently, because of good publicity 400 or so *C&VG* readers are taking part in *It's A Crime!* 14. So, fellow Game 14 CRASH readers, lets ally and CRASH Smash them . . .

Stephen Grant
Brighton
Sussex

Not a bad idea – though remember, Stephen, we have a few hundred players scattered about in an earlier game . . .

BK

FANTASTI

Dear Brendon
I thought I'd write in to tell everyone about the game *Further Into Fantasy*.

After applying for startup I received the rulebook and games magazine within one week. When I opened the package I was astounded by the quality of the rulebook, which has a coloured glossy cover and detailed information about the game printed neatly upon its glossy interior – very pro.

Further Into Fantasy is a fantasy *Dungeons And Dragons*-style game where the player role-plays as a warrior, sage or priest in the land of Dorm. Quite mystical.

I sent away for my first turn immediately and four days later I received another booklet (filled with player messages and news of

PBM FAN

TWO low-priced zines have come to light in this month's mailbag. The first is a selection of three games run from **Anthony Brown**'s address at *42 East Park Avenue, Holderness Road, Humberside HU8 9AE.*

Anthony and a few of his friends run a boxing game, a wargame, and a fantasy game. They charge 40p per turn (to cover costs). If you're interested, send Anthony an SAE and he'll write back to you as soon as possible.

And **Paul Hartmann**, who lives in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, wrote to say:

'Dear Brendon
I have been following your column ever since it started and I think it's high time I wrote you a letter.

Unfortunately, PBM is not very known in the Low Countries, though I'm trying to reverse that course with all my might. One of the things I have done has been the founding of a company to produce 100% Dutch games.

To date I have been running my company (Fantasia Arena) for just over a year and slowly people are opening their eyes to this wonderful hobby, though interest is minimal compared with that of Britain or the USA as yet.

Recently, John Nicholson let us run his game *Super Vorcon Wars* in a Dutch version. We also run two other fully computer-moderated games, both tactical space warfare, so we are making some progress.

If any of your readers are

TIC FANTASY

the game's progress), along with a completed character sheet, a fact sheet, my turnsheet and a welcoming letter.

After playing for only a few turns I am convinced that this is THE best game available. Please print this letter to let other readers know about this game!

Justin Taylor
Newton Abbot
South Devon

Thank you, Justin. Laboratory Games's Further Into Fantasy *is indeed very well-produced; for further details send an SAE to Laboratory Games at* Box 66, 19 Colburne Street, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 2EQ.

BK

NZINE FILE

interested in playing a Dutch game then they should feel free to write to Fantasia Arena at *van Bassenstraat 118, 3067 ND Rotterdam, The Netherlands.'*

Paul writes a PBM section for the fanzine *Conflict Gazet* (double Dutch to me); he also plays ten(!) PBM games, so he'll be in next month's Diplomatic Directory.

THAT ADDRESS IN FULL

IF you're in the PBM trade and you've got some news to pass on, or you want to share your PBM hints and tips with hundreds of thousands of rapt CRASH readers, drop me a line! Write to: **Brendon Kavanagh, PBM Mailbox, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.***

If you're sending an entry or an update to Diplomatic Directory, even if it's enclosed with another letter **PLEASE** write 'Diplomatic Directory' on the envelope so it can be processed quickly!

LUDLOW DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY SHROPSHIRE

DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY has been running for some time now, and seems to be a popular part of PBM MAILBOX

★001 Adrian Neal
48 Marketstead Estate, Kirton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1SL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 & 78; Capitol 15; Earthwood 52; Arcadia 6; Star Empires 1; Conquest*

★002 Jason French
78 Princes Road, Ellacombe, Torquay TQ1 1PA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander BLITAD)*

★003 Travis Smith
27 Sharmon Crescent, Braunstone Frith, Leicester LE3 6NW.
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Belle Julie)*

★004 Robert Darbyshire
22 Thornton Gate, Clevleys, Lancs, FY5 1JN
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 1 (Death Warriors); It's A Crime! 4 (Megacity Blues)*

★005 Stuart Millinship
17 Graveney Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6QW
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander SHUTUN)*

★006 Mr G G Manganoni
109 Kings Road, Farncombe, Surrey GU7 3UE
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Crasimoff's World; Explorers of Orion; Lands of the Crimson Sun; Aes; Mark of Chaos; Untamed Land; Vesuvian*

★007 Mr C J McCarthy
39A Seaview Road, Liscard, Wallesey, Merseyside L45 4QN
GAMES: *Starglobe 1; Star Empires 1; Vorcon Wars 19; Saturnalia; Fleet Manoeuvres P107*

★008 Scott Macfarlane
2 Broomside Terrace, Costorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7LZ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60; Super Vorcon Wars 77*

★009 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Commander PEPISH); Arcadia; Conquest*

★010 Kev Wasey
9 Clarkson House, Maysoule Road, Battersea, London SW11 2BP
GAMES: *Earthwood 30*

★011 Ian Hudson
53 Deepmore Close, Alrewas, Nr Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 65 (Commander PESTIB); Super Vorcon Wars 77 (Commander FRUGAD); World of Vengeance (Ian's Invincibles nr Bury St Edmunds)*

★012 Gareth Evans
4 Whitelands Road, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4AR
GAMES: *Arcadia 6 (Egg Groinside)*

★013 Mike Adams
774 Holmefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside LK9 3PQ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars; Conquest; It's A Crime! 4 (Priests)*

★014 David Lane
23 Florence Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham N92 5HR
GAMES: *Casus Belli 5; Player 16*

★015 Martin Higgins
Wallesey Road, Wallesey, Merseyside L44 2AG
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72; It's A Crime! 4*

★016 Cliff Frost
175 Queens Road, Leicester LE2 3FN
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Arcadia; Earthwood 44; Kings of Steel 17; Arcadia; It's A Crime!; Swords and Shields*

★017 Robin van den Yssel
Smaragdlaan 172, 2332 BX Leideh, Zuid Holland, Netherlands
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 (Commander TREBIN); Starglobe 3 (The Dutchman)*

★018 P Brunstan
Cae Mari Pwn House, Thomastown, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan, South Wales
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 2 (Death)*

★019 Steve Vickers
26 Swinton Court, Harrogate HG2 0BB
GAMES: *Soccer Star; Saturnalia; It's A Crime! 4; World of Chaos*

★020 Barnaby Dellar
11 Priory Grove, Stockwell, London SW8 2PD
GAMES: *Starglobe 4*

★021 Stephen Holt
27 Rosemary Road, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8ER
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 61 (Commander BRIDER); It's A Crime! 4 (Fighting Uruk-Hai)*

★022 Kevin Pack
Walnut Tree Lodge, 9 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire NN9 8JE
GAMES: *Earthwood; Saturnalia; Starglobe 4; Orion's Finger; It's A Crime! 3; Casus Belli; Aes*

★023 Matthew Hanson
10 Denby Lane Crescent, Grange Moor, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4EB
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Obsidian Fox); Arcadia*

★024 Gavin Marshall
36 Spur Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 0QL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 71*

★025 Owen Whitehead
213 Park Road, Barnsley, S70 1QW
GAMES: *Aes ('Rillion' – E Side), Saturnalia (Grendl of the Web), Enchirodon (Brothers in Arms), It's A Crime (Brothers in Arms), From The Mouth of Hell (Elf), World of Chaos (Rillion Kerr), Soccer Star (Morning Star RS League)*

★026 Damian Manning
12 Warden Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5SB
GAMES: *Starglobe (SS Alvon), It's A Crime (Merry Mob)*

★027 John Preen
12 Underdale Avenue, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 5DY
GAMES: *Starglobe Four (SS Broadsword of the Guild Alliance), Vorcon Wars 78 (Plonog)*

★028 John Kemp
9 Wold View, Caistor, Lincoln, LN7 6UU.
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (New York Assassins), Arcadia 8 (Lord Centaurus at Jihad City, P27)*

★029 Milan Petronic
24 Dell Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 2HZ
GAME: *Arcadia 13 (Draug Dur)*

★030 JC Fowler
11 Beaconsfield Place, St Agnes, Cornwall, TR5 0SZ
GAMES: *Starglobe Three, Arcadia 8*

★031 Kevin Edwards
52 Woodlands Road, Irchester, Northants NN9 7BU
GAMES: *Vorcon 60, It's A Crime! 4, City of Strife.*

★032 Jason Cottrell
17 Back Lane, Barrington, Cambs, CB2 5RF
GAMES: *Saturnalia (Axil Taranus), Tyranny (P5)*

★033 Michael R Stannard
44 Harrington Street, Cleethorpes, South Humberside, DN35 7AZ
GAMES: *Arcadia 10 (Mordran the Unknown at Seven Springs City)*

★034Malcolm Sums
76 Mount Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1YF
GAMES: *Soccer Star (Kilmore Oilers), Bradley's Football (Houston Oilers)*

★035 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Pepish), Arcadia 7 (Ped at Moriquendi City), Conquest (Anar Narion, maps 18/19)*

★036 S Davies
16 Clara Street, Ton-Pentre, Rhondda, Mid Glam, S. Wales, CF41 7HQ
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (gang 315), Vorcon Wars 64 (Chotub)*

★037 S Wyatt
60 St Andrews Road, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9JJ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 73 (Prifun), Vorcon Wars 78 (Sathal), It's A Crime! 4 (Mercenaries), Kings of Steel (Woodland Alliance)*

★038 Richard Goff
20 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU
GAME: *Arcadia 12 (player 17)*

★039 Jason Huggins
35 Garratts Lane, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2ED
GAME: *Saturnalia (Vetrex)*

★040 Dean Stuart
26 Ullswater Avenue, West Auckland, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 9LR
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AAAIIEEEE
ON BOARD THE FATED SHIP...
WE GOIN' CRASH
WE GOIN' DIE...
HOH!
BWAH!
... BUT I'M SO YOUNG... I'M SO PRETTY...
FWAH!
I AINT WORRIT IS YOU?
NOPE! DIS NEW KING WILL SAVE US PLURPS!
HOL' ON THAR! I DON'T WANNA DIE EITHER AN' I'M MUCH PRETTIER'N YOU, SO THERE!
HO HEE!
EMERGENCY ESCAPE POD
SAVEY KING
SAVEY KING
16..... 15..... 14..... BWAH!
YOU AIN'T!
I YAM!
AIN'T
AM!
LAS' ONE IN AM A PONGY HEGG!
ISN'T
ISN'T
TAIN'T
IS
IS
TIS
ME LAS'
13..... 12..... ME SCARED...
CLANG
CLAN'T!
4..... 3..... ME WANNA CUDDLE...
CLAN'T ??
PRICKLE
BADUMF
20 MINUTES LATER AS THE DUST CLEARS...
I'M ALIVE... I'M ALIVE...
BWAH!
I LANDED ON SOMETHING SOFT AN' SQUISHY AN' I'M ALIVE...
SUDDENLY, THE EYE OF OKTUP'S PREDICTION COMES TRUE....
PICTURES!
GAWSH! THE EYE OF OKTUPS PREDICTION HAS COME TRUE!
FREEZE! IN THE NAME OF FLASH GORDON...
FLASH GORDON?
WELL, I'M SORRY, GORDON, BUT IF THAT'S YOUR IDEA OF LOOKIN' FLASH...
QUIET!!
I WUS SHIPWRACKED HERE FIRST! THIS IS MY ASTEROID AN' I YAM THE LAW AROUND HERE...
SHORE IS...
I THINK IT'S THE GOATSKIN PANT'S THAT SPOILS IT...
...AN' YOU'VE CRASHED ON A DOUBLE YELLER LINE...
HEY!
WHASSEE LOOKIN' AT?
ARGH!
LOOK OUT, GORDON, BEHIND YOU!!
HAH!
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME WITH AN OL' TRICK LIKE THAT
EH?
WHAT? WHAT??
IS IT JUS' A TRICK? IS SOMETHING HORRID BEHIND FLASH? WHAT'S SOFT AN' SQUISHY AN' SAYS "ARGH" A LOT?... NEGS MOON, EH?

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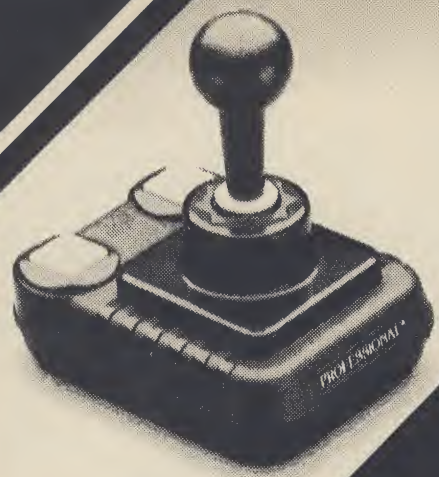

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CHORDON BLEU

A diminished and inverted JON 'NORMAN' BATES stabs Simon N Goodwin in the shower – no, sorry, discovers Techtricks's computerised dictionary of chords, and previews software for the Ram Music Machine

I PROMISED that this month I'd review synchronization devices for MIDI and multitrack tape recorders.

Well . . . sorry an' all that, but the things I wanted to compare and contrast have not yet materialised at the Bates Motel. As we go to press within about two seconds of my fingers flashing (should that read 'fumbling'?) over an ageing word processor, I guess I'll have to get on the phone, engage Nag Factor 9 and encourage all the long-holiday merchants to stump up review products.

One software house that didn't leap off to spend a fortnight on the floor at Gatwick-On-Sea was Techtricks. After spending long hours working in a recording studio, the brains behind Techtricks spotted, as several other companies have, a need in the market for low-cost, effective and useful music software. Not all of us have the cash or desire to splash out on several hundred pounds' worth of 16-bit hardware and allow the Spectrum to gather dust in the corner of the studio/bedroom.

First off Techtricks's production line is a chord computer – *Compachord*. The concept is simple. If you've ever bought sheet music of a Top 20 song, say, you will have seen above the lines the shorthand chord symbols: C7, Gdim, A6, (Z demented) and so on. Plonking your way through these is an arduous task when you need lots of chords to play the piece and you know two chords – one is C and the other one isn't!

One possible solution is to buy a chord book for either guitar or keyboard, usually called something bright like *5,000 Essential Chords*. This will frustrate you quite a lot – I know, I've tried them. There are also nice miniature chord computers with LCD; very smart and very pricy. In between these options is Techtricks's *Compachord*.

Load up and you get a keyboard display. Enter the name of the chord you want, and it appears on the screen in the form of asterisks on the correct notes. The choice of chords is very comprehensive, though not all-encompassing, and quite enough for the average player to cope with. What's more, they're quite accurate, with no clangers dropped.

Compachord will cope with major, minor, diminished, augmented, sixth, seventh and ninth chords and any crossbreed of those categories. Quite rightly, it defaults if you try to put in a chord that isn't used, such as a diminished sixth (which only exists in theory). It can invert any chord – ie rearrange the notes – through its three or four inversions, and just for kicks you can get it to run up the scale onscreen.

All in all, *Compachord* offers well over a thousand chords displayed in a very easy-to-understand fashion. I'm surprised it hasn't been done before; if it has, it didn't get into this column or any other that I can recall.

I was reviewing from the first version, and the upgrade will be available by the time you read this. This should have a guitar-chord display and sound all the notes, and will MIDI-connect with any instrument via any interface, so you can search for the right chord for your own compositions.

Compachord runs on 48/128 and is available for the reasonable sum of £8.99 (including postage and packing) from Techtricks Studio, *17 Whittington Rd, Tilgate, Crawley, West Sussex AH10 5AN.* Techtricks will be releasing several interesting MIDI programs, including MIDI delay, in the near future – look for reviews in this hallowed section.

BATTERING RAM

There must be many readers who bought the Ram Music Machine and are now eagerly awaiting the latest software from Ram/Flare. Well, there ain't gonna be any. It seems they only see profits in selling hardware and not in the upgrade software; I've also have heard mutterings that Ram's OTT ad campaign for the Music Machine (double-page full-colour ads in lots of music magazines) cost it several arms, legs and other appendages.

But fellow Tech Nicheian (what a mouthful) Simon N Goodwin (another mouthful) has already mentioned the Ram Users club and magazine run by Al Straker. This is officially sanctioned by Ram, which is only too happy to see you, the user, develop your own software. I reckon it's Ram's loss, not yours.

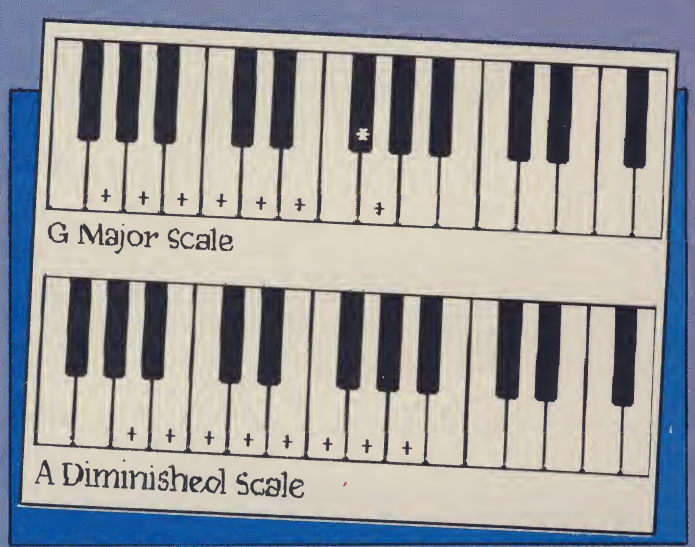
The club's first fruits are now available; they were on show at the ZX Microfair in August, and full reviews from me will follow. But as a taster try these two . . .

One is an eight-track MIDI real-time and step-time recorder called *Ramtrack*, £15 pounds from JB Software (nothing to do with me); the other is a rather smart £9 *Sample Editor* from Quasar Software, which goes into much greater detail than the sampling section of the Music Machine. It enables you to loop and hold samples with pretty well glitch-free results.

There are also rumours of 16-track recorders and conversion routines to make software intended for other interfaces run on the Music Machine and vice versa. You can get more info from the Ram Users' Al Straker by phoning (01) 451 5787.

Okay, that about wraps it up – next month we'll get round to synchronicity, and full reviews of the products mentioned above. In the meantime, send your enquiries to me at the usual CRASH *PO Box 10* address which is printed on every other page as it is . . .

► **Contemplating the essential harmony of the universe with Techtricks's *Compachord***



SIMON N GOODWIN tests Pascal and Fortran 77S compilers from Mira Software, takes a first look at Romantic Robot's +3 Multiface, and controls that model train – finally

MIRA CRACK'D

FORTRAN, one of the world's first computer languages, now runs on the 48K Spectrum, thanks to Mira Software; this small Leicestershire firm has also released a British Standard version of the Pascal language. Fortran and Pascal are widely used in colleges by engineering and computing students and, as a new academic year gets under way, it seems a good time to check out these compilers.

Compilers take programs written in a form that humans can understand and translate them into machine code, the simple, fast language of the processor chip inside the computer.

As any hacker knows, the best way to learn about computing is to get lots of hands-on experience, but students often end up queueing for a small ration of time on overworked mainframes.

So even a Spectrum can help a lot if the right software is available. A few years ago I found it worthwhile to do most of my computing degree coursework on my humble Video Genie – a 48K machine with half the processing power of the Spectrum. For too long the mystique of the mainframe has led people to believe that you can't run serious languages on a small micro.

Consider the number of students and programming enthusiasts with Spectrums – Mira Software could be on to a winner if their compilers are up to scratch. After all, *Turbo Pascal*, for bigger micros, has sold half a million copies. *Mira Fortran* is unique on the Spectrum, and Hi Soft's ageing *Pascal 4T* is the only competitor of *Mira Pascal*.

MIRA FORTRAN

30 years ago Fortran was a breakthrough, the first programming language that looked anything like English. It was developed to run on an early mainframe – an IBM 704 – and some of the peculiarities of that machine have been enshrined in the language ever since.

Hundreds of better languages followed Fortran, but it built up a following and went through several versions – like the Spectrum 128, but more slowly. Even BASIC was first developed in an attempt to make it easier to teach Fortran. The name stands for FORmula TRANslation.

IBM pitched the language at mathematicians and engineers. Nowadays Fortran is outdated, but it is used in so many standard routines that advanced engineering courses usually include Fortran programming.

Mira Fortran is based on Fortran 77S, a small version of the current standard. *Mira Fortran* can also compile many programs written using older standards such as Fortran 66 and Fortran IV.

THE PACKAGE

15 quid buys you a 16-page dot-matrix-printed instruction manual, and a cassette containing two copies of the compiler and three demonstration programs.

The A5 manual is too short to do justice to the program. It covers the difference between *Mira Fortran* and Fortran 77 at breakneck pace, throwing in a few useful hints and tips, and you have to read it several times before you're really sure what's going on. If you're new to Fortran you'll need a good tutorial; Roger Kaufman's *Fortran Coloring Book*, ISBN 0-262-61026-4, is my favourite.

LAYOUT

When Fortran was invented, programs were not typed directly into the system but read from cards punched with holes to require a punched-card-reader – indicate the required commands. At least *Mira Fortran* doesn't but, like all Fortran systems, it still expects you to enter your program as if it were on a card, strictly laid out in columns.

There are three types of line in a Fortran program. Comment lines (like REMs in BASIC) start with a C or a *. Debug lines start with D. They are used during testing and you can tell the compiler to ignore them, for a finished program, or compile them, for a test run. Thus you can keep test routines in your program text, and choose whether or not to include them just before you compile.

Anything else is a normal program line. The first five characters must be spaces or digits. You can put a line number here if you like, as in a BASIC program, but lines don't have to have numbers – and the numbers don't have to be in the correct order, though obviously it helps if they are!

The sixth character on a program line is usually blank, but a + sign indicates that the line is a continuation of the previous line. *Mira Fortran* is unusually fussy in that anything else gives an error.

Individual Fortran lines have a fixed maximum length of 80 characters, and you can only put one statement on a line. Many Fortran compilers ignore the last eight characters, treating them as a comment, but Mira's program compiles the entire line. Programs must be in capital letters, apart from comments and messages. Spaces are ignored.

THE EDITOR – RUDIMENTARY?

The *Mira Fortran* editor loads from tape in about 90 seconds, and works much like the ZX BASIC editor. You type in lines character by character at the bottom of the 32-column screen; earlier entries are displayed at the top. Long lines wrap around at the edge of the display. You can move left and right in the usual way to correct mistakes in the line you're working on.

When you press ENTER the syntax of the line is checked. If all is well *Mira Fortran* asks for the next line; otherwise you must correct the mistake at the place shown before you can continue.

You stop entering lines by pressing the ↓ key. This gives you access to a set of single-letter commands to edit lines or scan up and down the program, line by line or in eight-line steps – much as in BASIC. Fortran text can be loaded, merged and saved on cassette. The H key calls up a list of commands.

You can list the file to stream 3, usually a ZX printer or Centronics interface, but you must print the whole lot. There's a block delete command to get rid of several lines, but no way to copy a block without deleting the original. This editor is rather rudimentary, but few people will prefer a card punch.

COMMANDS

Mira Fortran recognises most of Fortran 77; the biggest restriction is probably the absence of COMPLEX and DOUBLE data types. Decimal values use the Spectrum's default precision of about nine digits, and integers are limited to the range -32768 to +32767. Logical (true or false) values are packed into single bits to save space.

Memory permitting, you can declare arrays of any number of dimensions. Variable space can be shared, using COMMON and EQUIVALENCE. DATA statements let you preset variable values.

Maths functions include logarithms, type conversions, trigonometric and hyperbolic functions, things like MOD (to find the remainder after division) and a job lot of MIN and MAX functions to pick out the biggest or smallest of several values.

All the usual numerical comparisons and logical operators are allowed, but *Mira Fortran* lacks routines to handle characters – you can't slice strings or stick them together.

Program control facilities are very rudimentary. The DO loop is similar to FOR..NEXT in ZX BASIC, and there are three kinds of IF test, including Fortran 77's multiline IF..THEN..ELSE.

Functions and subroutines can be defined and called with any type of parameter. Built-in subroutines mimic BASIC's ARC, BEEP, CIRCLE, DRAW and PLOT commands, but you must write your own POINT function if you need it. The only way to control attributes like INK, PAPER, OVER and so on is to print the appropriate control codes; this isn't mentioned in the manual.

For a long time Fortran led the way in its range of output-formatting facilities, and *Mira Fortran* reflects this. The syntax is horrible, but that's Fortran; however, the facilities are pretty good, and there's a nonstandard PRINT command which you can use if you don't want to bother with the bells and whistles of Fortran's WRITE. *Mira Fortran* imposes some minor restrictions on FORMAT statements, but all but the most obscure programs should compile without trouble.

You can't use cassette data files, but you can read and write disk and microdrive files from a Fortran program. The trick is to open the files from BASIC, and then use the appropriate stream number from inside the Fortran program. You can read or write files from the start, but you can't use random access to move back and forth.

END can be used to check for the end of a file in a READ statement, but the check has an unusual syntax and only works on files which are read a line at a time.

COMPILING FORTRAN

When your program is complete the X key starts the compiler. Before it generates machine code, *Mira Fortran* scans the whole program at a rate of about 16 lines a second, looking for mistakes that could not be spotted on a line-by-line basis, such as missing ENDs or mistyped names. If a mistake is found one of 15 rather general error messages appears: for instance, an absent END produces the unhelpful message 'Wrong statement order'.

When an error has been found the appropriate line is marked with a flashing question mark and you are thrown back into the editor. When all the errors have been fixed the computer beeps and the screen shows a mess of dots and lines. This appears because the compiler uses screen memory to hold details of the names in the program. In this way, the size of program you can compile is increased.

The next step is to load the second part of the system, which actually performs the machine-code translation. The translator takes a minute to load, and then it scans through the program at about 30 lines a second, generating machine code. When it has finished it displays a list of numbers: the code address, length, place to CLEAR before running and, for no apparent reason, the address of the program's COMMON storage area.

As soon as you press a key – by accident or deliberately – the information vanishes and the machine resets, leaving the code at the top of memory.

This two-step approach allows you to compile programs of several hundred lines on a small machine, but it makes *Mira Fortran* a drag to use; you must reload the editor and translator every time you compile a program. This is not too bad if you've got a disk or microdrive, especially if you save the program and editor together with a 'magic button' utility, but it is very frustrating on a cassette system.

PERFORMANCE

Compiled Fortran runs without the compiler loaded. You start programs with RAND USR 63500. They are always at least 5K long, because they load a library of utility routines at the top of memory. The code is not particularly concise – the programs I tried used about 50 bytes per line.

Integer arithmetic proved to be fast – between 30 and 100 times quicker than BASIC and similar in speed to *Mcoder* and Softek's IS integer BASIC compilers. You can only break into compiled Fortran when SCROLL? is displayed.

Floating-point number-crunching was not very fast. One demonstration routine searched for prime numbers, digging them out at a rate of about two a second. The method proved to be very inefficient, but the compiled code was only about twice as fast as equivalent ZX BASIC, or a fifth quicker than BASIC compiled with Mcoder 3.

Mira Fortran can't always detect errors in FORMAT statements. One incorrect program compiled without a squeak, but locked up the machine when I ran it. And it took a while to fix, because there was no hint of the position of the error. In the end I kept loading and recompiling the program with extra PRINT statements till I zeroed in on the fault.

THE VERDICT – USEFUL BUT LIMITED

Mira has produced a real Fortran compiler for the Spectrum. Unfortunately *Mira Fortran* is not particularly friendly. It lacks some of the features you'd expect on a larger system – like a run-time debugger and linker – but it is still a useful package for compiling fairly small, independent Fortran programs.

MIRA PASCAL

Mira Pascal has many of the features of *Mira Fortran* and it too costs £15, but it has been produced more recently and has fewer rough edges. It's a complete, modern version of Pascal. Mira Software says that the microdrive version complies with Level 1 of British Standard 6192.

Like the Fortran compiler, *Mira Pascal* is supplied on cassette. The A4 instruction manual is only 12 pages long but it is better organised and easier to use then the Fortran manual. If you already know the standard and can puzzle out the rather technical error reports you should not need any other information; otherwise you'll need a tutorial. The manual recommends a book that deals specifically with British Standard 6192.

The tape has three different versions of the compiler. The cassette version allows about 22K of memory for program text; the microdrive version is a little larger, and both leave about 1800 bytes unused at the top of memory in case you need to load a printer-driver there. Then there's a condensed tape version which allows an extra 3K of program. It loads at the very top of memory, has no help page and uses numbers rather than text to report errors.

Pascal is a very different language from Fortran. It was invented in the late Sixties by a Swiss computing professor, Niklaus Wirth (and named after the 17th-century French mathematician Blaise Pascal); it was designed both to be easy to compile and to learn, and to encourage systematic – structured – programming. This is a style of coding that makes programs easy to read and to modify.

There are usually two stages in the development of a program. First you make it up; then you make it work. Pascal forces you to think before you start coding: it reduces the amount of time you spend debugging, because to use Pascal effectively you have to make plans first.

This is good discipline for professional programmers, because it is almost impossible to write big programs that work unless you plan them carefully from the start. Pascal has a bad name with some hackers because it's not suitable for bodging small programs together quickly.

PASCAL EDITOR

Mira Pascal uses an editor similar to the one supplied with the Fortran compiler, with all its commands and more besides. Now you can move directly to the start or end of the text, duplicate blocks as well as move them, and load and save files on microdrive as well as on cassette. (The manual tells you to use key S to save to microdrive, but it should say D.)

You can compile text files created by a word-processing system such as *Tasword 3*, but, sadly, you can't load Pascal files into the word processor.

All the usual features of Pascal are included: *Mira Pascal* works with characters, Boolean (true or false) values, integers +/-32767, nine-digit floating-point numbers and subranges, packed into single bytes when possible.

Data structures are the strong point of Pascal, and *Mira Pascal* works with conformant arrays, variant records, pointers and sets of any size. DISPOSE can only reclaim the space used by the most recent dynamic variable allocated, so programs that make heavy use of pointers may run out of memory after a while.

Besides standard functions and procedures *Mira Pascal* supports BEEP and the drawing commands and maths functions of ZX BASIC. USR lets you call machine code but does not return a value. Once again POINT is missing, and INK and OVER must be set by printing control codes.

Characters do not appear by default on the screen when they are read from the keyboard. If you want to be able to see and edit your input you must call the procedure EDITOR before using READ or READLN. (This worked well for me except when I typed a blank line – then subsequent input was invisible!)

Mira Pascal can use files opened from BASIC, as can *Mira Fortran*. It also supports temporary files which automatically disappear when you leave the block of code that created them. Unlike *Mira Fortran*, the Pascal compiler lets you RESET and REWRITE files, and check EOF as normal.

The microdrive version of *Mira Pascal* automatically saves your program when you start the compiler and reloads it when you run the editor. Apart from this, the compiler works in two steps, like *Mira Fortran*. It displays one number after a compilation – the address to CLEAR – just before the compiled code. This number is also printed out, if you have a printer connected.

GOOD PERFORMANCE

When I tested the compiler, the speed and size of *Mira Pascal* code proved to be similar to that of *Mira Fortran*. Integer-handling was again impressive, but floating-point maths was only two or three times faster than ZX BASIC. The compiler worked very quickly, each step processing between 20 and 30 lines per second.

Mira Pascal comes with three demonstration programs. The first searches for all the prime numbers between 1 and 32767, using a sieve method much more efficient than the corresponding Fortran demo. It took 40 seconds to run, and I was able to reduce that to 15 seconds by making minor changes to the listing.

The second demo computes and displays three-dimensional graphs, clipped to fit a box on the screen. It worked quickly and well.

Last on the tape is a well-written spelling-checker. This comes with a dictionary of just 800 words, expandable to 2,000, but it is a fine illustration of the way *Mira Pascal* can be used to develop sophisticated programs.

I like *Mira Pascal* – it is a valuable addition to the Spectrum programmer's armoury, especially if your microdrives are in working order! It should give *Hi Soft Pascal* some serious competition.

Mira Software is at *24 Home Close, Kibworth, Leicestershire LE8 0TJ.*

CORRECTION – SCREEN$ HANDLING

THERE WAS a serious subediting mistake in last month's article headed POP-UP SCREEN, at the end of the first column on page 86. 'The number of the page moved' should have read 'The number of pages moved' . . . !

► Doing the +3 a favour: Romantic Robot's Multiface Three

NEW HOPE FOR THE +3

THE FUTURE of the Spectrum +3 is looking brighter now that Romantic Robot has produced the Multiface Three, with which you can transfer cassette programs for the Spectrum + and 128 onto disk.

The £44.95 Multiface Three is, in effect, a set of utility programs that you can run any time without disturbing loaded programs. The standard program (in ROM) lets you save screens – or the entire program memory – to disk or tape.

You can also type in POKEs to change the operation of games.

And a Multiface contains RAM as well as ROM, so you can load all sorts of utilities into the space – the *Gamester* infinite-lives trick reviewed in Issue 41, for instance, or *Genie*, a friendly machine-code disassembler.

These utilities are the first in a growing market which is increasing the flexibility of the 'custom' Spectrum. Like IBM PC-users, Spectrum-owners are learning the value of a sidekick.

The Multiface Three also includes two new routines to print screens at any time through the +3's printer port.

To make space for new files, you can suspend programs and format a disk at any time, or look through the disk directory and erase unwanted files. Disk files are usually saved in a compressed form and automatically expanded upon reloading, which should help the Multiface Three fit more than one game on a disk. (Each Amstrad disk holds just 173K, but most current 128 games leave lots of memory unused.)

Packing the entire memory into a single code file also helps the Multiface Three save room on the disk and increase loading speed.

Romantic Robot has done Amstrad a big favour by producing an add-on that makes the +3 worth considering. But even if the +3 comes down to £199, with the Multiface Three at £45 you'd be well-advised to check out other disk systems with 'magic buttons', such as the Swift Disc (reviewed here last month) and the Disciple (which Franco Frey reviewed in Issue 38).

And there are a few problems lurking: the Multiface Three may not operate with software produced specifically for the +3, for instance. Still, the prototype I tested works pretty well – and there'll be a more detailed report soon.

WE'RE GETTING THERE

ADAM SHEPPARD wants to know if it's possible to control a model train from a Spectrum. It is – but it's not easy, and you'll need a good knowledge of programming and digital electronics.

First, you must find an input/output port for the Spectrum. A Centronics parallel printer port might be good enough, if you can discover the port addresses and wiring assignments – otherwise you'll need a purpose-designed interface for experimenters.

Maplin (tel: Southend-On-Sea (0702) 552911) has a Spectrum I/O Controller on page 264 of its current catalogue. You'll also need the parallel-port kit on the same page, so the whole lot will cost £35-40. Electronic And Computer Workshop (tel: Chelmsford (0245) 262149) sells a similar system. I haven't used either product, so I can't vouch for them.

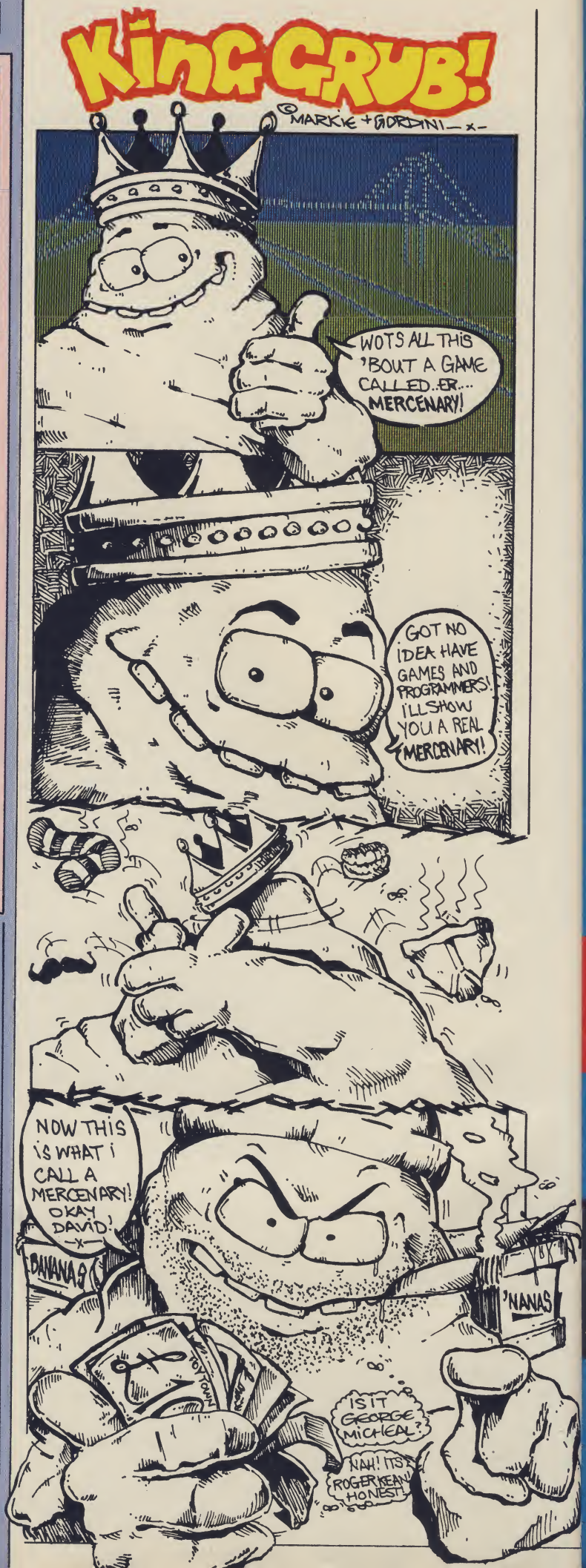
You could design and build your own controller for about £10, but you'd need to know all about digital electronics and Z80 addressing. If you don't know roughly how to do this already I'd advise you not to try unless you can find someone more knowledgeable to help you.

A controller just lets you set and test digital signals outside the computer. You must write appropriate software, and build extra electronics to interface the controller to sensors and power controls for the railway.

Babini has just published a slim £2.95 paperback of suitable circuits, together with a clear and sensible discussion of the problems involved. *Electronic Circuits For The Control of Model Railways*, ISBN 0-85934-154-2, is written by the prolific R A Penfold. The book assumes you're wiring things up to the user port of a BBC Micro, but a Spectrum port works in much the same way.

If you've got a Tech Tip that deserves a wider airing – or a technical query – please write in with the details. The address is, as ever:

Simon N Goodwin, Tech Tips, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*



BY TONY CROWTHER & ROSS GOODLEY

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CENTURIONS: © 1987 RUBY SPEARS ENTERPRISES, INC.

RAPID FIRE

Producer: **Mastertronic**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Icon Design**

The crime of the month, if not the century, is under way – criminals have made their headquarters in a deserted warehouse and filled it with computer equipment, and they're ready to paralyse the electronic security systems of four victim banks.

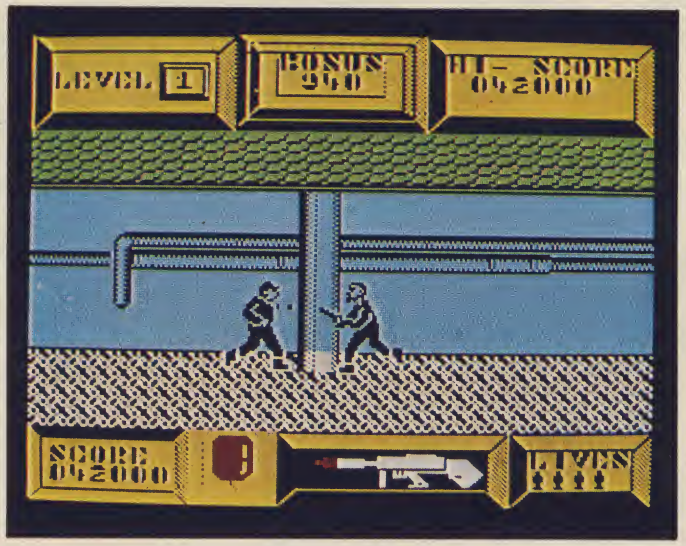
There's only one solution, so your police superiors have ordered you to destroy the warehouse and all the equipment it contains.

To do this, four plasma computers must be deactivated. The active (red) rotating plasma vent in each computer is its Achilles' heel, and should be taken out by a well-directed shot.

But the computers are protected by a swarm of desperate criminals who just don't like an undercover cop that much. You carry a gun for protection against these evil rapscallions and their grenades and missiles (but be careful – while you're busily gathering points, the gun can overheat).

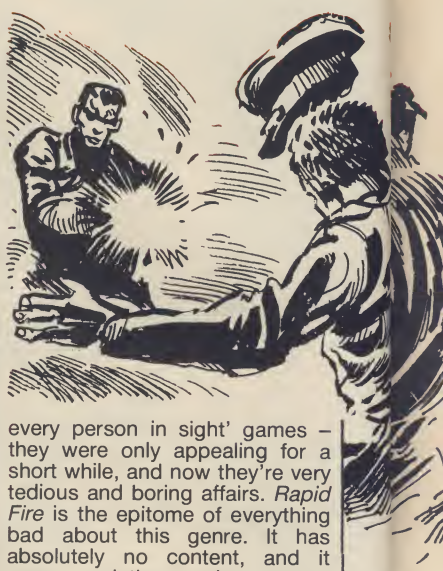
After taking out the plasma computers, you can enter the master level of the warehouse hideout, thus setting off a chain reaction in the central power electrode and foiling the bank robbers' plans for good.

► *Rapid Fire* – **more a kind of feeble blast**



CRITICISM

● " I'm sick of all these 'shoot every person in sight' games – they were only appealing for a short while, and now they're very tedious and boring affairs. *Rapid Fire* is the epitome of everything bad about this genre. It has absolutely no content, and it seems pointless going around blasting every single thing that moves. I'm not a pacifist, but all this violence makes me sick. "
PAUL **27%**



● " Rapid Fire **is a highly boring, unaddictive shoot-'em-up. The graphics look like they were made in ten minutes on a Friday afternoon (some of the enemies' weapons are like black lemons, and your own machine gun is a**

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR

Producer: **D & H Games**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Authors: **John De Salis and Tony Huggard**

Wheel and deal in the football world, matching the cut and thrust on the pitch with the Machiavellian intrigues that lurk in the boardrooms of big-time sport.

As a team manager, you appoint coaches, physiotherapists and scouts, make bids for stars and sell declining players to raise money.

Matches are automatically played between your team and the other sides in your league. After full time a final score is shown, complete with scoring players and score times. The results of other matches in your league are also shown, and with each completed set of fixtures the ever-changing league table showing your position can be called up.

You can also get an update on your squad, telling you the number of goals it's scored and conceded, the number of games it's played, and whether it's carrying any injuries.

Just as important, of course, is an accurate statement of your financial condition. If your bank balance isn't enough to support all your deals, you can arrange loans, overdrafts and mortgages, or sell shares in your club to cover your financial shortfall.

Remember the bread-and-butter expenses that are incurred every week, such as wage bills and general running costs. Regular income to offset these includes gate money, interest payments from the bank and TV broadcast fees.

There's an active transfer market in which you can boost a flagging team by buying the best players – or raise money by selling them. Bids can fail, though, leaving you intensely disappointed when you're unable to persuade your favoured player to come to *you* instead of plumping for the exciting football adventure that is Grimsby Town.

Out of all your transfer dealings the government takes a third of the fee, and it takes 15% of any gambling wins you make.

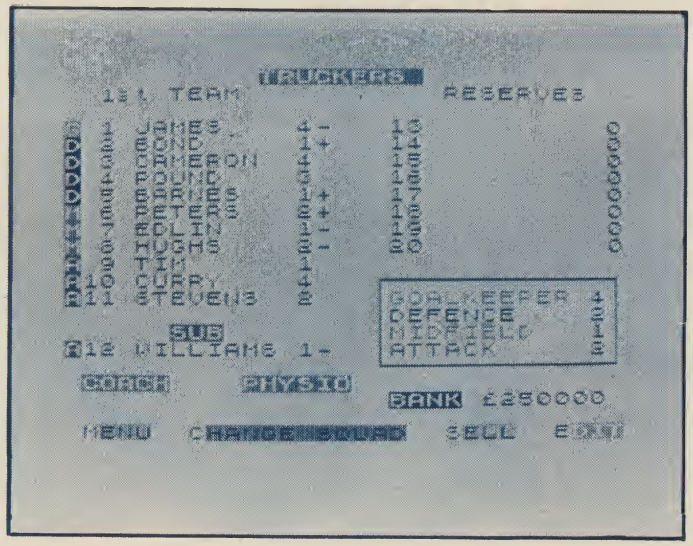
At the end of the season, if not before, your financial decisions can break or make the club you run. So poverty or riches, glory or bust may await you just round the corner . . .

CRITICISM

● " *Football Director* tries to dominate the Spectrum football market and bury the rival *Football Manager* for good. It fails dismally. *Football Director* holds all the features (not attractions) of the old favourite – slow responses, no graphics, glaring colour. And the inlay is extremely uninformative. *Football Director* is a slow and poor imitation of a very overrated predecessor. The high price is ten times more surprising than the game. "
PAUL **11%**

● " Football Director **is the worst game I've seen for months, and**

► **All the world's a football pitch in D&H Games's sports-management simulation**



simple stick) and the animation is pathetic. The only decent thing about Rapid Fire **is the loading screen, so there's nothing worth buying here. "**
NICK **40%**

● *" This is the kind of primitive junk I'd have expected from a budget label a couple of years ago. The gameplay is extremely limited, so there's virtually no playability. And the graphics are horribly flickery, with unconvincing animation of the main character – though the characters are nicely detailed. I doubt* Rapid Fire *will appeal to many; it certainly left me cold. "*
BEN **30%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: poor and badly-defined
Sound: squidgy explosions
General rating: a very inferior shoot-'em-up with little playability

Presentation	52%
Graphics	46%
Playability	27%
Addictive qualities	25%
OVERALL	**32%**

it's worse than Football Manager. **The colour is unattractive, and the black-on-white text could become hard on the eyes – if anyone has the patience/lack of intelligence required to play** Football Director **for more than half an hour. "**
MIKE **8%**

● *" Get ready, all you intellectuals out there – you'll need an O level in Football Studies just to load this up! Like the other football management games,* Football Director *is text-only and very boring. You can choose what to call the players and the teams, but that doesn't brighten up this drab simulation. "*
NICK **19%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: none
Graphics: text-only game; ugly colour
Sound: minimal FX
General rating: a poor and expensive substitute for Addictive's *Football Manager* (well-received in CRASH Issue Four)

Presentation	24%
Playability	16%
Addictive qualities	16%
OVERALL	**13%**

SAMURAI TRILOGY

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin Graphics in-house**

You are one of a select band of fighting warriors attempting to become a Samurai War Lord in this martial-arts simulation (see Run It Again this issue for all the others!).

To prove you worthy of the title, your fighting and mental skills must be tested in three Oriental disciplines: karate, kendo (a form of fencing) and samurai. In each of these techniques you need to overcome an acknowledged master – such as the terrifying Ta Ling, who catches cobras and makes stew from their remains to increase his fitness.

Each opponent has a favourite means of attack; he might rely upon strength, speed or skill, and you must respond with the best defensive strategy. For instance, your speed might neutralize his strength, or your skill might help you beat a very fast opponent. The choice is yours. You can also choose the skill level of your opponent; the better he is, the more points you'll earn if you emerge the victor.

Preparation is essential before every contest, to improve your abilities through circuit and weight training, running, isometrics, breathing, brick-breaking, sparring and meditation.

After each phase of combat, attack and defence tactics must be chosen by allocating five points among four key attributes: skill, stamina, strength and speed. An unsuccessful defence strategy or wasteful attacking can diminish you in all four areas, but wise fighting and sound training can earn you extra attack strength from the watching Supreme Master Chu Yu.

After the first rounds of karate and kendo you may meditate or change tactics – but during samurai the action is continuous, and you must defeat four opponents as you fight to the death to become a Samurai War Lord.

► **The way of the rude hand signals:** *Samurai Trilogy*

CRITICISM

● " Gremlin's first martial-arts simulations had a strong atmosphere, usually created by lifelike graphics and effective sound. But both are absent from this latest (and hopefully last, if they keep coming like this . . .) wireframe slant-eyed game. The graphical presentation is hopeless – it's obvious that more time has been spent on the character set than on designing the game. The moves are quite easy to carry out, but they all look the same. It's all a bit old hat. "
PAUL **41%**

● " Samurai Trilogy **is simply three** Way Of The Exploding Fist**-type games on one tape. The graphics aren't anything to shout about, and when your warrior jumps over the background his head changes colour! This is just another run-of-the-mill martial-arts game. "**
NICK **65%**

● *" This is one of the worst beat-'em-ups around. The graphics are poor, and there's not much playability or addictivity –* Samurai Trilogy *seems like nothing more than a program put together hastily to satisfy orders. The character set is nice, though. "*
MIKE **41%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined characters against a simple background
Sound: no tune, a few spot FX
Options: playable in four languages; opponent's skill definable; joystick control only (no keys)
General rating: a lacklustre martial-arts simulation

Presentation	63%
Graphics	50%
Playability	48%
Addictive qualities	47%
OVERALL	**49%**

πr^2

Producer: **Mind Games**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Binary Design**

You know what it's like – faced with a tense situation, your mind goes blank, you can't think of anything, and you feel like the thickest person. Oh sorry, you're like that all the time? Well, Professor Storm isn't, but he's desperate to collect all his intellectual thoughts and put them firmly under control.

And to do that he must travel through his own mind, which is made up of interlocking cogs; Storm can travel either clockwise or anticlockwise on their rims. Travelling with a cog's motion increases the prof's speed, while movement against it slows him. If Storm just stops walking, he moves at the same speed as the rim.

All this rotating is to help our eggheaded hero reconstruct the scientific formulae he once knew; when he completes one revolution on a wheel rim Storm picks up part of a formula, but only by collecting all the parts in the correct order can he move to the next level and the next piece of disassembled knowledge. (The required forumla is displayed at the beginning of each level.)

Storm's otherwise routine task is hindered by stray, distracting thoughts. Some journey predictably on the cogwheel's rims, but others switch randomly from rim to rim, or even home in on the poor befuddled man. If these touch the dear professor they can reduce him to a moron – so keep a check on Storm's IQ. If it falls to zero, he loses one of his five scholarly lives.

Some wheels have fond memories or abstract thoughts at the centre, and they can

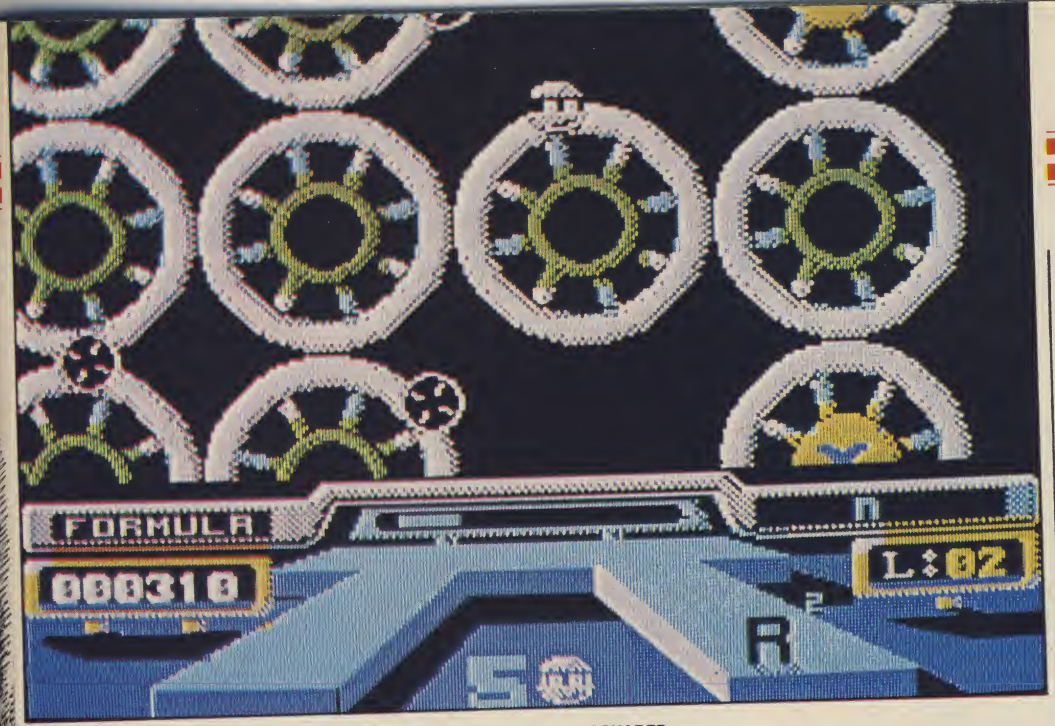
MARK

" After a few games I started to enjoy swinging from cog to cog and saving the poor old professor from a very embarrassing situation. Graphically πr^2 is nothing startling, but it's competent and quite playable. "

53%

Are you horrible enough to go on the RAM

Ro



► That's you on the centre cog, looking for the vital formula in πr SQUARED

PAUL

" This latest Mind Games extravaganza certainly taxes the old grey matter as well as requiring some lightning reflexes. πr^2 has all the appeal of Think!. The concept is amazingly simple and straightforward, but each level is ridden with a fiendishly constructed array of wheels. And there are some vicious stray thoughts, making planning essential. It might be a bit expensive – but there are mounds of addictivity in πr^2, and it's definitely worth fiddling with. "

77%

temporarily paralyse him Storm or take down his intelligence.

But to help him in his rotating task the professor can collect other objects from the centres of the cogs: a book raises his flagging IQ, a calculator speeds up his movement on a rim, a hammer lets him swat a stray thought, and if the prof finds a trash can he can dump in parts of a formula in the incorrect order.

NICK

" If you're trying to forget all that maths homework you haven't done, avoid this one! The central character looks like a cross between Bobby Bearing and a baked bean and the scrolling is terrible. The idea is simple, and so are the graphics – but their presentation and the different formulae to work on make it highly addictive. πr^2 is a brilliant little game. "

69%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: none
Graphics: simple but effective
Sound: tune and spot FX
Options: definable keys
General rating: an enjoyable and fast-moving puzzle game

Presentation	63%
Graphics	56%
Playability	66%
Addictive qualities	68%
OVERALL	**70%**

You'll know soon enough!
Rampage, coming to your home computer screen, December.

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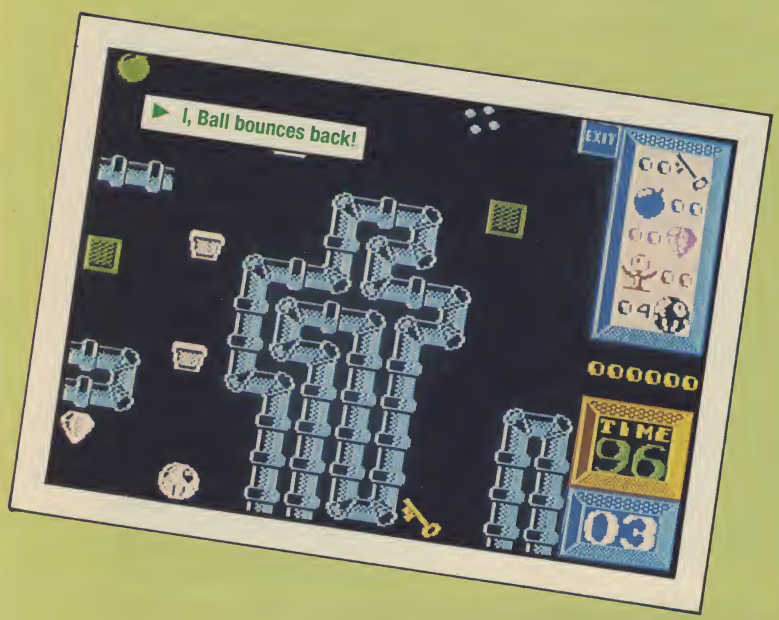
I, B·A·L·L 2

A CRASH Smash



Producer: **Firebird Silver**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Timothy Closs**

After his bouncing conquest of the evil Terry Ball in Firebird's CRASH Smash *I, Ball* (Issue 39), the bulbous I, Ball is sent down deep mines to investigate the history of the Balls (a race of multicoloured, well, balls).

I, Ball jumps and bounces through this subterranean maze of antiquity. The flame-thrower he carries must stand him in good stead against the hordes of rotating blocks, spinning squares and descending cubes that seek to do our rotund hero down; I, Ball can earn clusters of points by destroying these geometrical muggers before they take his five lives.

There are 50 screens through which I, Ball must work his way – by finding a key in each screen and getting to the exit with it, within a time limit. And as he progresses I, Ball should gather valuable historic artefacts by bundling his globular form into them.

" I, Ball 2 is the most frustrating game I've ever played – the screen layout gives you minimum manoeuvrability! But the special FX are fantastic, with loads of speech, crumbling rocks, and masses of nasties. Colour is used extremely well, too, and the graphics are superbly well-defined. Considering that the idea of I, Ball 2 is so simple it's amazingly addictive and compelling. "
NICK **90%**

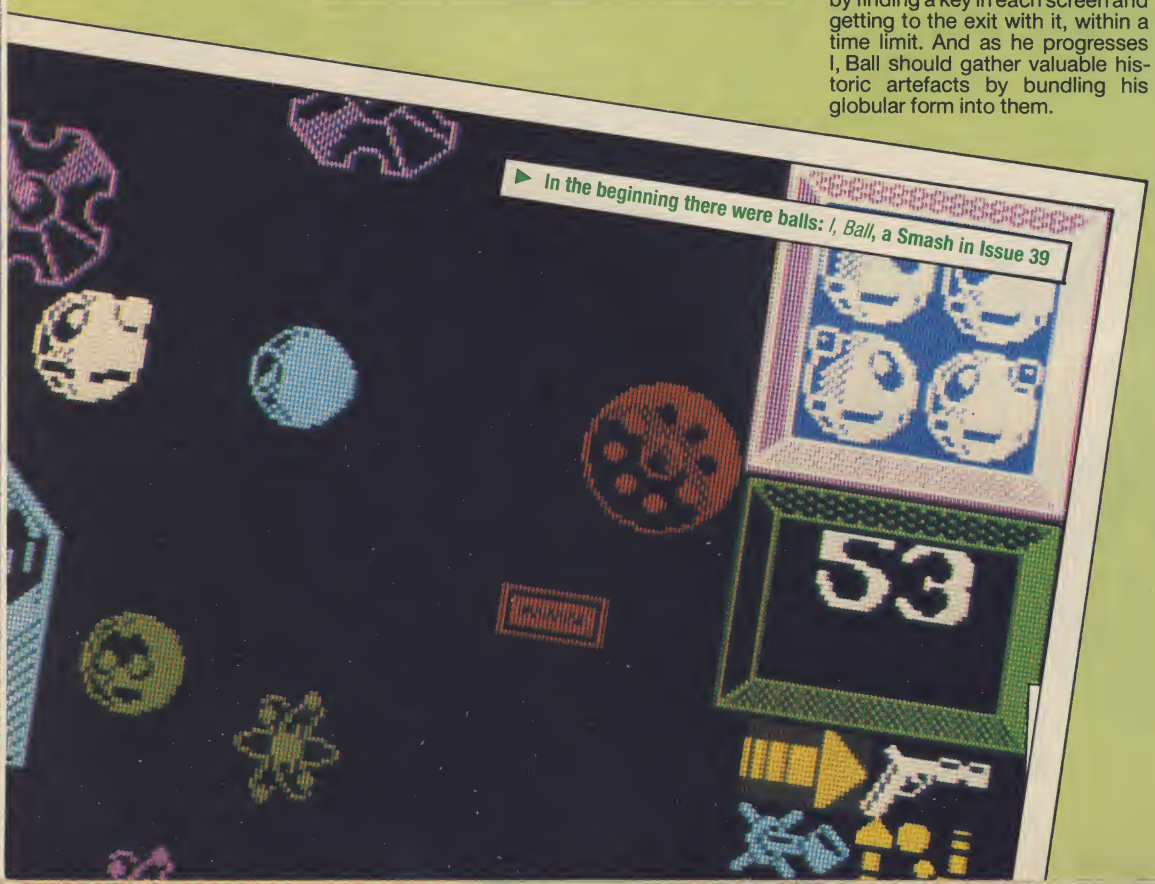
" I, Ball 2 is a very playable leap-around-and-blast-everything-in-sight collect-'em-up. Graphically it's great, with a cheerful-looking little bouncing ball sproinging around nicely-drawn backdrops. There are plenty of nasties trying to stop him – and for many games they will succeed admirably . . . "
MARK **87%**

But each mine has its own peculiarities and characteristics, which I, Ball must discover and use to his advantage . . .

I, Ball can pick up extra lives, weapons and so on as he moves through this strange world; points are awarded for such kleptomania. Power Stones have the strangest of properties – they can boost power, slow opponents in a power warp, or increase a leap.

" I, Ball 2 is a really excellent game. The graphics are smooth and fast, though they're not very exciting, and the gameplay is challenging and fun. The sound is superb: the title tune isn't exactly Mozart, but the in-game effects and the speech are really good, ranking next to the original I, Ball. This is a great game – and it's budget too! "
MIKE **93%**

When this roly-poly explorer has advanced through five mines, he is treated to the sight of a priceless object, made in the youth of his race. And when I, Ball has gathered ten such objects his task is complete and he can once more be fêted as a hero.



In the beginning there were balls: *I, Ball*, a Smash in Issue 39

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-drawn, well-animated cute characters
Sound: magnificent speech but weak tune
General rating: a very successful follow-up to *I, Ball*

Presentation	86%
Graphics	83%
Playability	89%
Addictive qualities	89%
OVERALL	**90%**

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DEATH WISH 3

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin Graphics in-house**

In *Death Wish* he killed a few punks, in *Death Wish 2* he killed a few more . . . but in this *Death Wish 3* film licence, street vigilante Paul Kersey is out to slaughter the world. Well, perhaps not the world, but certainly a lot of the bums and street vermin who skulk in the streets of New York.

Kersey patrols a 3-D construction of the Big Apple's streets. Using compass and map, he can pinpoint the punks he's searching for – and find the weapons he needs to wipe them out.

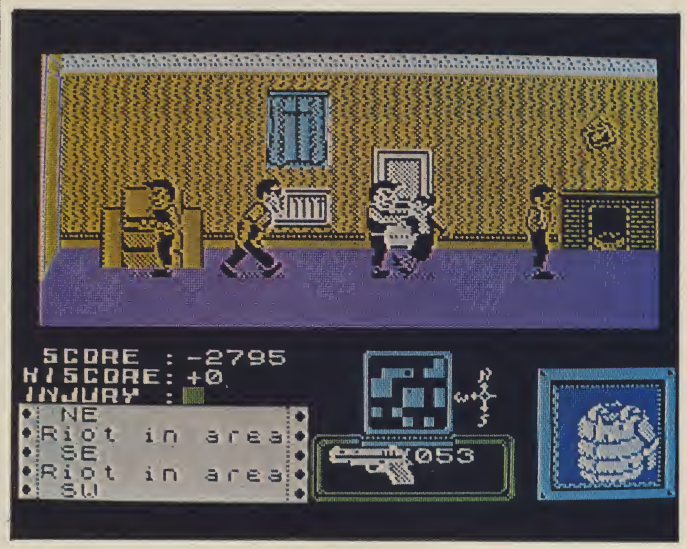
With a Magnum, a pump-action shotgun, a machine gun and a rocket launcher clanking in his bulging pockets, our hero begins his cleanup campaign, using each weapon till its magazine is empty. When he's finally weaponless, Kersey gives a resigned shrug and must go in search of protection.

But he isn't alone in his fight against the forces of evil – the boys in blue are on his side, supplying information on where riots are breaking out in the violent city centre.

As Kersey, you earn points for each piece of New York low life rubbed out. But take care – these gang warriors sure ain't boy scouts, and they're armed with guns and clubs.

And though our vigilante has a heavy bulletproof vest chafing at his chest, it can only take so much. Wear and tear on this protective undergarment is shown by an icon, and a bar indicates how seriously Kersey is injured.

It may be a jungle out there, but our Charles Bronson lookalike can find a brief respite by hiding in run-down tenement rooms. Once inside he can sneak a peek through windows, and fire shots into that mad, mad world out there. Plugging a creep from this position earns you higher points – but be on guard for surprise attacks from behind.



► **Paul Kersey turns his back while some little ol' granny gets duffed – this is no way to carry out** *Death Wish 3*

Points are lost if you mow down one of New York's helpless law-abiding inhabitants, and the cops are bound to get a little irritated if Kersey bumps off too many of their men.

And just so too many corpses don't lie rotting on the pavement, medics dash on to drag the odd cadaver away – and Kersey certainly keeps them busy.

CRITICISM

● " The graphics are good, with brilliant characters, but the gameplay and the way Bronson moves are poor. It seems the object is to destroy *any* moving object – and killing someone with a rocket launcher is a mite barbaric, reducing them to just a pile of dust! There are some neat touches, such as the ladies of the night walking about, tempting you, and the way you can shoot out of windows. *Death Wish 3* is graphically attractive, but it won't appeal for long – especially as you can't turn off the irritating tune. "
NICK **54%**

● **" There's been too much attention paid to the sicker parts of** Death Wish 3 **– the gore left by a bazooka blast, the realistic twitching of the characters when they're hit by a volley of shots – at the expense of the game. Navigating the angular streets and the mazelike interior of the buildings isn't easy, even after an awful lot of practice, and this might put off beginners. And getting duffed up is pretty tedious; if more than one baddie has a go it can take a long time and a huge amount of energy to get away, which often costs you the game. I can't recommend** Death Wish 3**. "**
BEN **34%**

● " Death Wish 3 *is dull. The mindless carnage might appeal to real sadists – but it gets tedious. The title tune isn't bad, but though the graphics and characters are quite clear, they're unattractive. Despite its image, this can't be recommended even to fans of the* Death Wish *films. "*
MIKE **48%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined, with colourful backgrounds – colliding characters are messy, though
Sound: a fair tune, not much atmosphere
General rating: the attractive appearance doesn't compensate for unexciting gameplay

Presentation	73%
Graphics	61%
Playability	41%
Addictive qualities	39%
OVERALL	**45%**

HEIST 2012

Producer: **Firebird (Silver)**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Lee Dowthwaite**

It is the year 2012. Earth has been living on credit for some time now, and the few people who still use 'real money' put it into massive bank organisations, the biggest of which is the L.D. International United Bank in Switzerland.

The bank is so big that even its employees know only a tiny fraction of the vast complex. Day and night it is patrolled by troops of cyber guards that will destroy anyone they find lingering suspiciously around the bank.

You play a poor computer-systems engineer who has a craze about money and will do anything to get it – even hack your way into the central bank computer and transfer all the money from other accounts into your own.

On each level of *Heist 2012*. you must find a key. This opens a safe, from which you collect letters that build up a password. When you have all the letters, find your way to the computer room and press HACK. You must then type the password and press ENTER. If the password is accepted, you'll gain access to the next level.

Type 'exit' and press ENTER, and walk over to the elevator to leave the computer room. Elevators, represented by shafts of light, are dotted around the playing area to make your life easier; to start an elevator just walk into it and to get out on the next level just walk out left or right.

But watch out – if you touch a cyber guard, you lose strength and risk death.

► **Password-passing, code-cracking and bank-breaking in** *Heist 2012*

CRITICISM

● *" Heist 2012* is the worst game I've yet reviewed at CRASH – it's just a bad imitation of *Jet Set Willy*. The opening music is flapdoodle *(Nick Roberts Daft Dictionary)*, and there are the usual unimaginative monsters like blinking eyes, moving splodges and big lumps of something. The gameplay isn't very exciting, either . . . "
NICK **10%**

● **" The graphics take us back to the innovative and original days of** Jet Set Willy **and** Technician Ted**, but sadly that's where the similarities finish.** Heist 2012 **is boring and devoid of character, like the graphical person you control. I just hope people don't take this as a typical Firebird budget release. "**
PAUL **11%**

● *" Aeons after most people are sick of platform games, out comes this rubbish – I was terminally bored after only a few games. A horribly deformed sprite totters around a crudely-drawn screen, and there's a weak and grating 'tune'. Firebird has made a big blunder releasing this. "*
MARK **15%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: small, uninteresting sprites on a plain background
Sound: does for the ears what the graphics do for the eyes – with an awful tune
Options: definable keys
General rating: a very poor platform game with particularly missable graphics

Presentation	19%
Graphics	13%
Playability	16%
Addictive qualities	11%
OVERALL	**12%**

WHY RUN WITH THE PACK, WHEN YOU CAN FOLLOW THE LEADER...?

MASK I

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin in-house**

If Matt Trakker had known he was going to have to enter a time vortex to rescue his fellow MASK agents, he wouldn't have enjoyed his breakfast cornflakes quite so much.

Created by the odious organisation VENOM, the vortex has delivered Trakker's colleagues to four other times – Boulder Hill, Pre-Historic days, the Far Future and VENOM Base – in this licence featuring characters from the *MASK* TV cartoon series and Kenner Parker toy range.

There are two agents awaiting rescue in each time, save in the first where Trakker rescues just one agent and his own MASK – which gives him superpowers.

To begin the rescue operation, Trakker must enter the vortex in his flying car *Thunderhawk*, already racing against time. First he needs to put together eight keys. Each has been split into four parts, and must be pieced together on an assembly screen; there are useless bits of key lying around to confuse Trakker, though, and only six parts can be carried at a time.

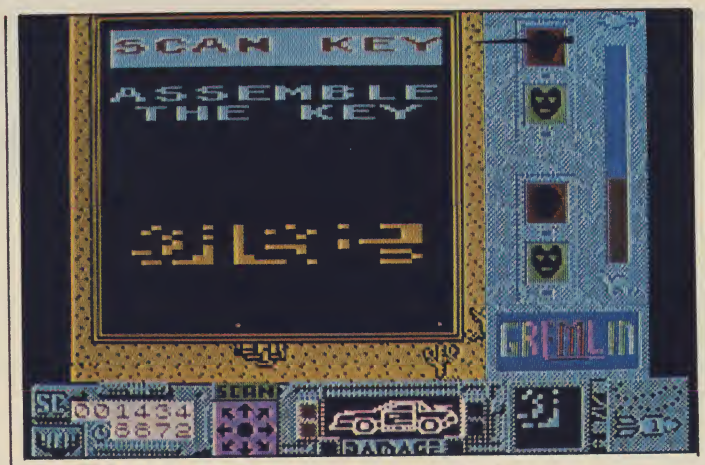
Our hero needs the keys to activate two scanners which will locate his missing agents. Following the scanners' electronic directions, Trakker can pick up his fellows by driving *Thunderhawk* into any doorways that might imprison them. A MASK agent will leap for freedom into the flying car – and then the search for his own MASK can begin.

Trakker's task is not made easier by obstacles that block *Thunderhawk*'s path, so he collects bombs to remove them – a quick getaway is essential, though, because the destructive devices can wipe out Trakker as well! Up to three bombs can be carried at a time.

In each time, different perils are encountered: falling boulders in Boulder Hill, pterodactyls in the Pre-Historic period, UFOs in the Far Future, and at VENOM Base erupting snakes and lumbering firing tanks. If they're not destroyed by *Thunderhawk*'s weaponry (for points as well as satisfaction), these can damage the vehicle. Damage is shown on a indicator display, and repair kits must be collected when two units of damage have been sustained.

After the agents on a level have been rescued, they can be returned to the vortex, and Trakker can make his way to the next of the unknown times.

Finally VENOM Base can be destroyed in a series of deadly stages – and then Trakker's ultimate goal is achieved, and he can go home for another soothing bowl of cornflakes.



► **Heading down toward a heavily-guarded building in *MASK I***

RICKY

" Games based on popular toys have never really worked before – Transformers **and** Challenge Of The Gobots **were letdowns – but** MASK I **looks like it'll put all that right with a very involved puzzle/shoot-'em-up game. It's well-designed, well-executed and immensely playable, and has enough action to prevent it from becoming too much of a cerebral exercise. Controlling** Thunderhawk **may be frustrating at first. but when the inertia effect has been overcome it's positively useful (especially when dodging the falling rocks on Boulder Hill!).** MASK I **is a game to spend time over and work at – definitely no one-minute wonder. "**

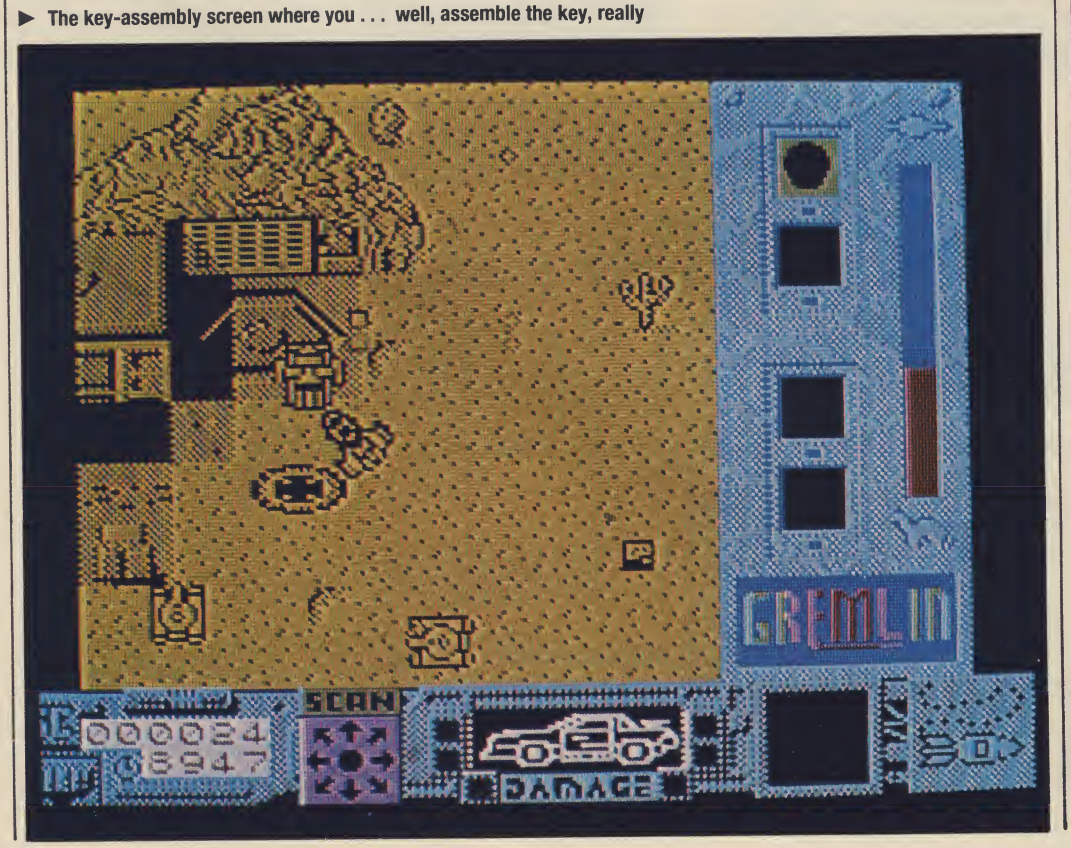
85%

MARK

" Graphically MASK I **is very good, with a horde of nasty VENOM baddies chasing our hapless hero around a solid, colourful screen. Sound, though, consists of the usual bangs and crashes, and control is quite fiddly – but the game's addictiveness keeps you playing. "**

87%

► **The key-assembly screen where you . . . well, assemble the key, really**



PAUL

" MASK I certainly has the graphical appeal of a successful game, but it's too tedious to keep you interested – most of the time is spent trying get hold of a very uncontrollable car. The layered graphics give as strong a feeling of 3-D as possible, but the lack of colour detracts from the atmosphere of the different eras. Though MASK I stands out from the others of its genre, mainly because of the graphics, it lacks the edge of appeal. "

70%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined; monochromatic playing area
Sound: 128 tune and additional FX
General rating: a worthwhile licence with lots of depth and playability

Presentation	66%
Graphics	80%
Playability	74%
Addictive qualities	76%
OVERALL	**81%**

SUN STAR

Producer: **CRL**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Authors: **The Zen Room**

Realising that the sun can be used to obtain something other than a tan, scientists construct 16 solar grids in space. These orbit all the suns of the universe, efficiently creating energy crystals.

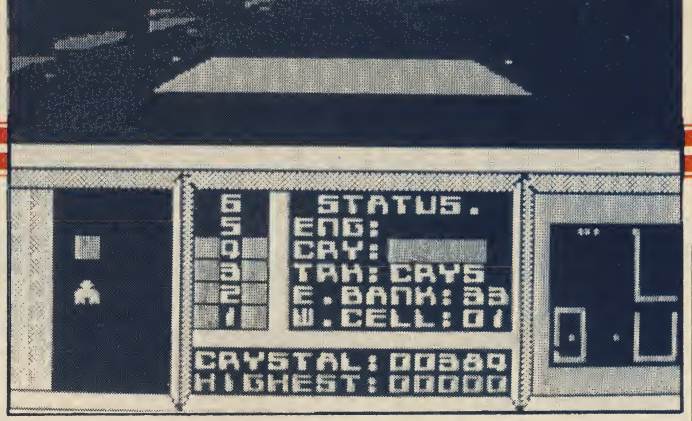
However, the craft that once collected this raw product can no longer do so because of the accumulation of unstable energy pulses. The *Sun Star* supply craft has therefore been built.

Four white disruptor pulses exist on the gridwork of each solar panel. Firing at these with laser bolts makes them jump to another part of the grid, leaving behind a green energy crystal. But if this crystal isn't quickly collected by sliding the *Sun Star* over it, it loses energy and burns out all the crystals already collected.

When ten crystals have been gathered from one a you move to the next grid by passing through the revolving warp gate and firing a laser bolt into the heart of an orange hyperwarp cell.

The *Sun Star*'s energy, reduced by laser firing, high-speed travel and space obstructions such as red energy pulses, can be supplemented a limited number of times by entering the hyperwarp cell. Each time, one of the collected crystals is lost, though.

The *Sun Star*'s position is pinpointed by a global scanner and a short-range viewer identifies nearby targets. The main 3-D screen shows the grid with the positions of the coloured cells and the dangerous red energy pulses, and the position of the last disruptor pulse fired is given at the head of the screen.



▶ **Weird 3-D action in CRL's *Sun Star***

CRITICISM

● " Sun Star *was probably meant to be one of those games which people play because it's wild and wacky – like Jeff Minter's work. But* Sun Star *fails miserably because of dull and inefficient gameplay and difficult screen layout.* "
RICKY **31%**

● **" The 3-D grid idea isn't exactly new – it's been used repeatedly in games such as** Glass **(Quicksilva 1985) and more recently** Plexar **(reviewed this issue). And because you have to keep your eyes on the scanners at the bottom of the screen, you never look at the grid itself. The idea of chasing white blobs around the grid and shooting hell out of them is so unappealing that it won't hold anybody's attention for long. "**
NICK **49%**

● " The big 3-D scrolling area at the top of the screen turns out to be completely useless – the only useful thing, in fact, is the very basic scanner lower down. *Sun Star* has very little content and is simply lots of trekking around a black screen: the graphics create absolutely no atmosphere and the sound is a disgrace. *Sun Star* is a disappointment. "
PAUL **20%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: terrible colour clash on the 3-D grid – and generally poor
Sound: weak spot FX
General rating: an imaginative idea for a shoot-'em-up, but uninteresting gameplay and graphics

Presentation	**41%**
Graphics	**25%**
Playability	**29%**
Addictive qualities	**26%**
OVERALL	**30%**

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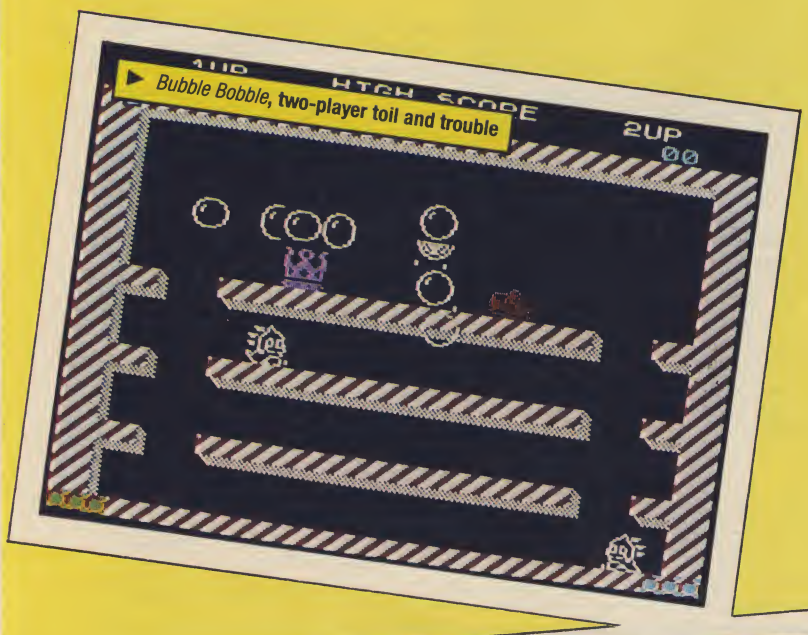


▶ Bubble Bobble, two-player toil and trouble

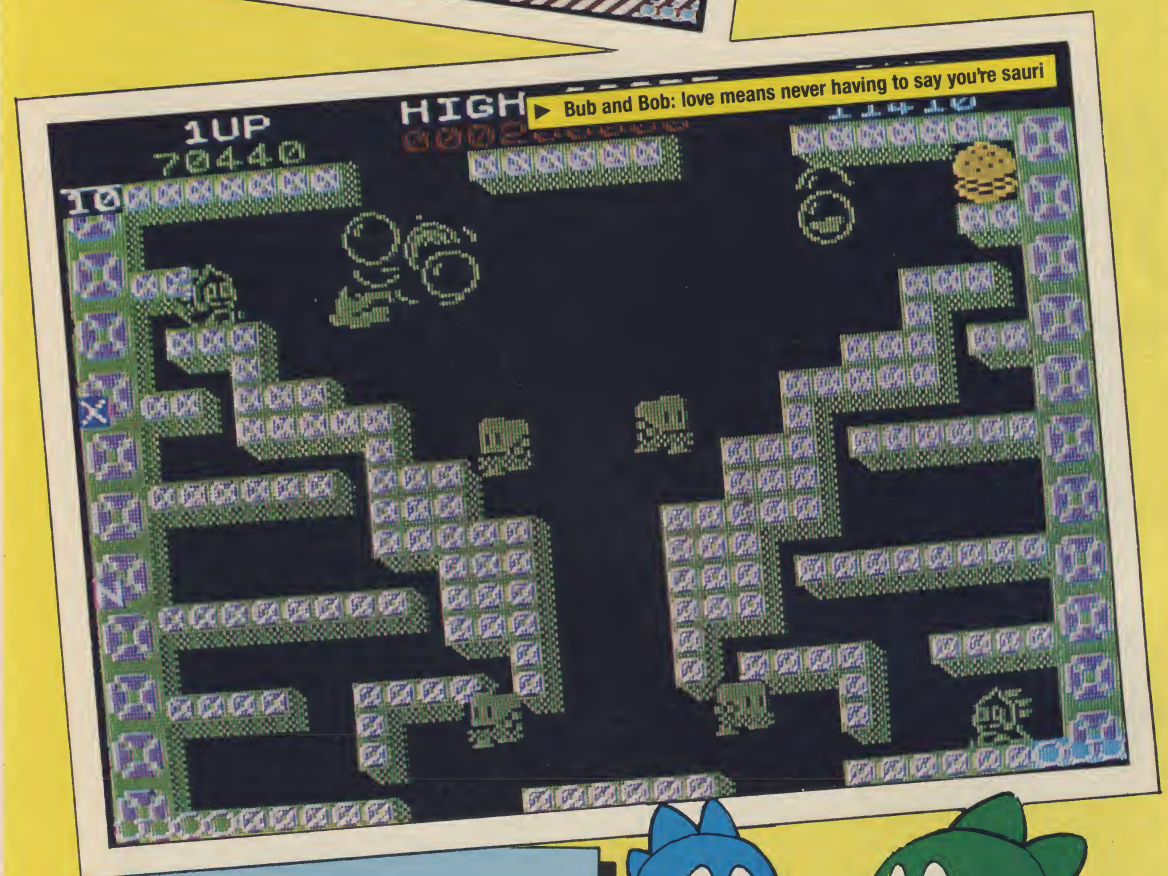
Bubble-blowing Brontosauri? Yep, Taito's crazy arcade game featuring the fun-loving Bub and Bob has finally made it onto the Spectrum. The troublesome two are off to rescue their lady friends, who are lost within a string of prehistoric caves.

Each cave consists of a screen filled with platforms, and Bub and Bob progress from one cave to the next when the entire screen has been cleared of the killer cave-dwellers.

Though *Bubble Bobble* can be played by just one person it is ideally for two simultaneous players; when two-player mode is selected Bub and Bob appear onscreen and shortly after that the hostile cave-dwellers emerge and rush around the network of platforms.

Bub and Bob's only defence against the dwellers is the bubbles which the two sauri spit. A bubble travels forward a short distance before floating upward, and any creature caught in its horizontal path becomes trapped for a while . . .

Now the fun begins – if the bronto jumps up and pops the bubble with his tough horny head, the creature within bounces around the screen, stunned, and turns into a banana which can be collected for an extra score. However, if a bubble with a creature in isn't burst quickly the prisoner escapes and rushes around the screen in a strop looking for the responsible brontosaurus.



▶ Bub and Bob: love means never having to say you're sauri

CRITICISM

" Having never actually played the arcade version, though I've seen it, I'm totally intrigued by Bubble Bobble **– beautifully simple and well-executed, it plays superbly, looks good and has that one-more-go appeal that'll have you playing till the brontosauri come home. The continuous tune on the 128 version matches the frantic action of the game and certainly keeps the adrenaline rushing. I reckon** Bubble Bobble **will be one of my all-time favourites, and it's definitely one of the best arcade conversions this year. "**

RICKY **93%**

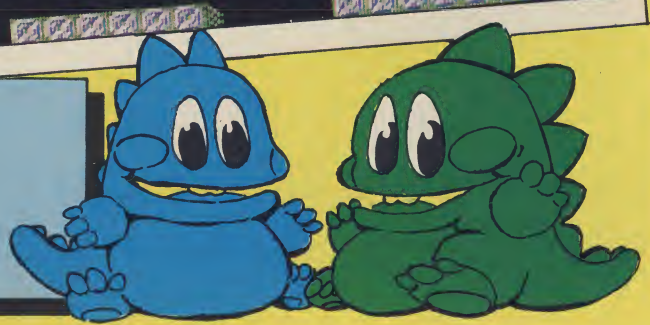
Another hazard which appears if a screen isn't cleared quickly enough is the dreaded Baron von Blubba, an indestructible horror who'll track down the heroic dinos and give them his fatal touch if all the other creatures aren't destroyed very rapidly.

CRITICISM

" Bloop, bloop, bubble bobble – Bubble Bobble **is like overdoing it with the bubble bath! It's just popping with playability and addictiveness. The cute little characters move very well, the platforms are very colourful and there's no clash visible anywhere. The bonuses are fantastic, and two-player mode gives that extra boost of excitement if you're evenly matched. Just one final thing to say: WATCH OUT FOR THE GIANT PEACH! "**

NICK **86%**

Producer: **Firebird**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Software Creations**



A CRASH Smash

SOLOMON'S KEY

Producer: **US Gold**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Probe Software**

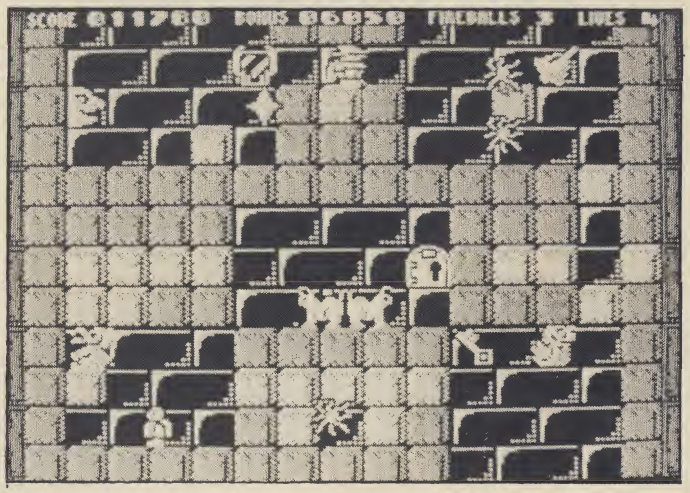
Deep in King Solomon's mines lies a vast fortune, there for the taking – for anyone foolhardy or greedy enough to enter the subterranean world.

To reach the unimaginable wealth in this conversion of a coin-op original, you must make it alive through a series of rooms inhabited by menacing creatures like fat-tummied parrots, Michael Jackson llamas, jellyfish and fireball-firing heads. Not even the hardiest of souls can withstand their withering touch, and you have only six fragile lives . . . but the unpleasant creatures can be disposed of with the fireballs you find in this underworld.

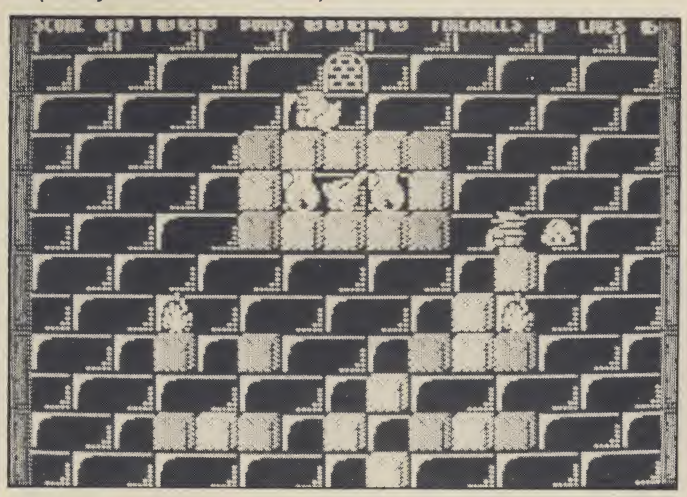
Each room contains coloured blocks arranged in patterns across the screen; these can be used as stepping stones to a key that unlocks an exit door. Finding a successful route isn't easy, but large open spaces in rooms may be crossed by laying further blocks to create a staircase. Take care, however – the inhabitants of the dark mines can destroy the block you're standing on, sending you tumbling down.

You too can destroy as well as construct, evaporating blue blocks that obstruct a horizontal pathway.

In each underground room, objects – handbells, angels, acorn crowns – can be collected to accumulate points. A time bonus can be added to this total – but if you overstay your welcome and can't reach the treasure before the deadline, then time really has waited for no man and money no longer concerns your corpse.



► **Looking out for Michael Jackson in this latest H Rider Haggard licence** ***(shurely shome mistake? – Ed Dir)***



CRITICISM

" Bubble Bobble **is so much fun! The graphics are cute, and though it's quite easy to play it's remarkably addictive. Having seen the other versions, I was convinced that the Spectrum game was going to be a let-down – but far from it,** Bubble Bobble **is excellent, pretty, enjoyable, addictive, simple, exemplary and a strongly-recommended buy.** "
MIKE **93%**

Throughout a level, bubbles float up from the bottom of the screen. Some are water-filled and when they're burst they cause a miniflood which pours down the screen, sweeping away any creature that stands in its path. Other bubbles contain letters, and an extra life is awarded to the lucky pair if they can form the word 'E X-T E N D'. Occasionally saurus treats appear, either giving extra points or endowing the prehistoric pair with special powers.

As the dinosaurs progress through the levels, all manner of creatures are encountered. Early levels are inhabited by square-headed morons, but as you progress the locals get more vicious and start lobbing things back to counteract the bubbles. On finally reaching Cave 100, the last one, you come face to face with heap big chief cave-dweller who's bigger, nastier and generally more unpleasant than anything encountered before. Bubbles at the ready, boys . . .

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: plain backgrounds but supercute characters
Sound: marvellous 128K tune, good spot FX
Options: two simultaneous players possible – even recommended – and definable keys
General rating: the most playable arcade conversion this year

Presentation	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	91%
Addictive qualities	89%
OVERALL	**90%**

NICK

" **King Solomon must have been a pretty wealthy bloke judging by all the treasure dotted around here! Anybody remember Mastertronic's** Rockman**? Well,** Solomon's Key **is very similar but a bit better presented. The graphics are well-defined, the animation is good and there's plenty of playability. The idea of dodging nasties and collecting keys may not seem too exciting but I assure you you'll be addicted in a second.** "
83%

MIKE

" Solomon's Key **has quite a lot of playability, and though the first screen is very easy the second is much more difficult and needs thought. With its small characters and bright graphics** Solomon's Key **looks like a budget game and probably should have been one – still, it's fun.** "
69%

BEN

" **Despite its simplistic plot and gameplay,** Solomon's Key **has turned out very well indeed. The graphics are good, though they do get a bit cluttered when there's a lot going on. And though I doubt I'll be playing it in a few months, the game as a whole is appealing and fairly addictive.** "
83%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: small and not very colourful **Sound:** reasonable spot FX and decent opening tune
Options: definable keys
General rating: a simple but enjoyable arcade puzzle game

Presentation	81%
Graphics	73%
Playability	82%
Addictive qualities	78%
OVERALL	**78%**

XECUTOR

Producer: **ACE**
Retail price: **£7.99**
Authors: **Cybadyne**

Faced with the unenviable prospect of a Sunday afternoon sitting in front of the TV, you decide to take to the space waves and blast a few alien bad boys into oblivion.

As you venture through a vertically-scrolling corridor, waves of attacking alien craft appear wielding deadly laser blasters.

So it's 'do as you would be done by' as you try to take out these entities with a series of forward-firing weapons. Equipped at first with just a low-level gun, you can enhance your arsenal by destroying certain alien craft; this reveals weapons that can either be collected or themselves destroyed to take you on to a more powerful system.

At the end of each corridor section is a large ominous craft; accurate fire knocks out vital components, but the ship is then transformed into an even more formidable opponent ready for blasting. A measly three lives, fast manoeuvring and expert fighting are the only things that can get you home tonight . . .

MIKE

" Xecutor's colourful graphics make it an attractive game to play, but it's a bit annoying to 'crash' on touching the corner of a character set on a curved piece of scenery. The scrolling is smooth, and in two-player mode the gameplay is a lot more fun and doesn't slow down; otherwise, Xecutor is just a standard shoot-'em-up with neat graphics. "

80%

PAUL

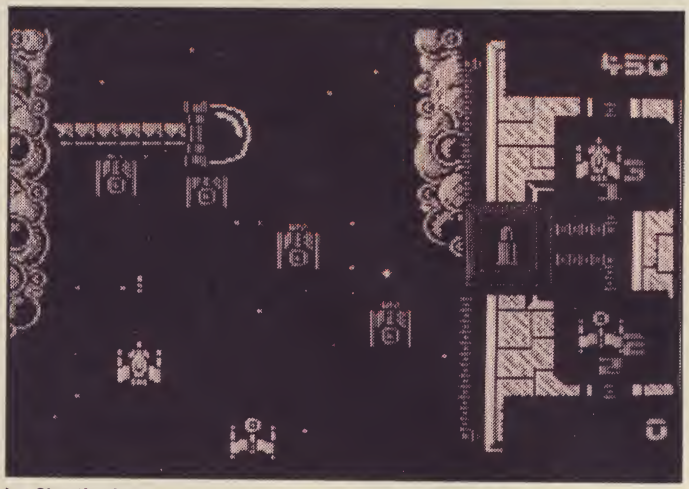
" OK, so it's Zynaps turned through 90 degrees . . . but at least it's a credible clone with a few attractive variations. For instance, the two-player option is a clever addition in which you can not only help but also hinder the other player, and this adds a new dimension to the Nemesis concept. The pick-up technique also requires some skill. Forget the monochromatic Slap Fight and Moonstrike – what you've got here is a playable shoot-'em-up with a superb splattering of colour that doesn't spoil the game one iota. Once you've completed Zynaps turn your hand to Xecutor, and you'll find the same appeal with more challenge. "

87%

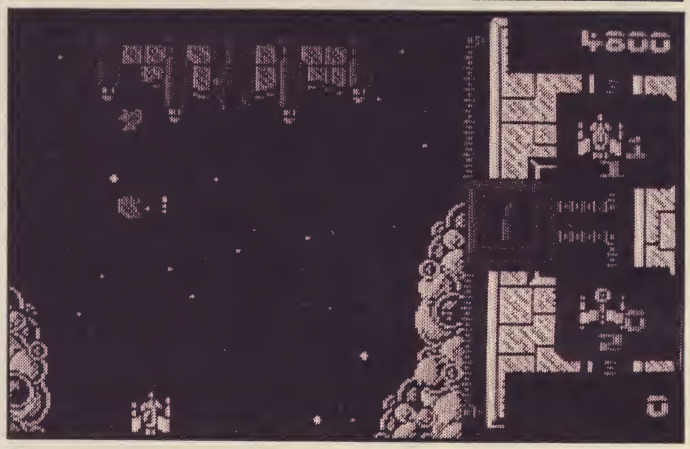
BEN

" Xecutor is one of the best shoot-'em-ups I've seen in ages. It's got great graphics with brilliant scrolling colour scenery and detailed superbaddies. Some of the add-on weapons are very original – the split firing and the pod are really devastating. Xecutor's only drawback is that it's very difficult, difficult to the point of being infuriating after an hour or so stuck on the first level! "

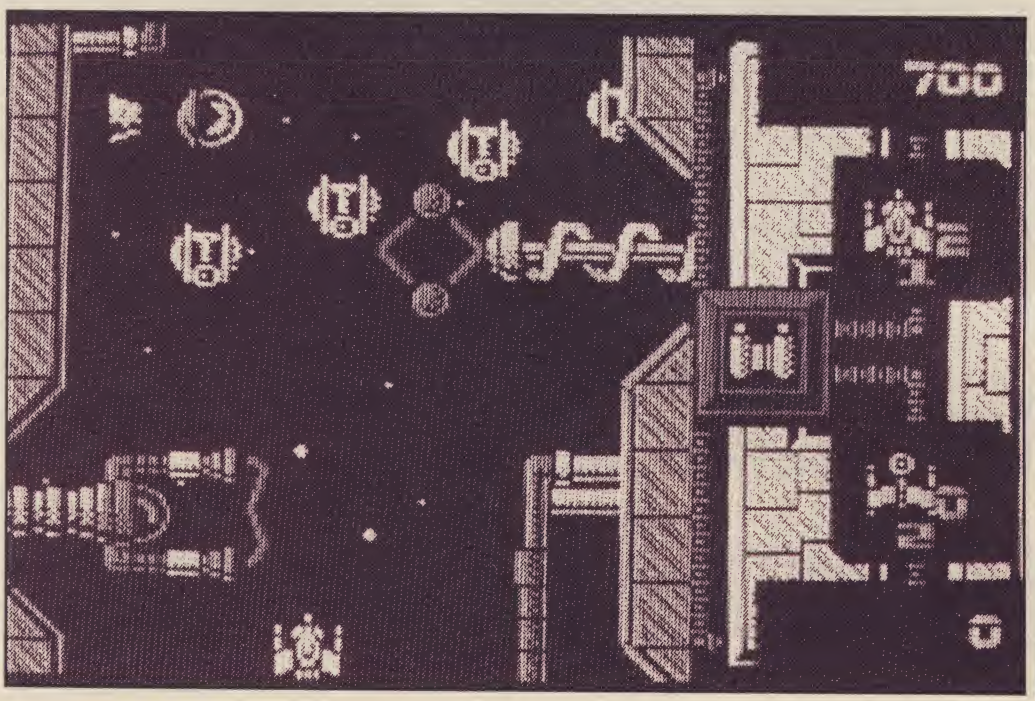
86%



► **Shooting 'em up starts with the weapon option shown in that box on the right of the screen**



► **Prepare to meet your doom, you hulking great mother ship!**



► **Hordes of marauding foes and other alien clichés . . .**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: excellent, colourful and detailed with smooth scrolling
Options: two-player mode, definable keys
General rating: a superb shoot-'em-up – a must for anyone who liked *Zynaps* – getting The Edge's new ACE label off to a fiery start

Presentation	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	82%
Addictive qualities	80%
OVERALL	**84%**

HAPPINESS IS A HOT JOYSTICK

Tired of laundromats, speak-your-weight machines and out-of-order phone boxes? Just can't think what to do with those spare coins? BEN STONE and TONY THOMPSON on their tour of the latest arcade creations . . .

SDI
Atari

BEN ■ Those stinkin' subversives have finally pressed their little red button; all civilisation is only four minutes away from total annihilation, and the whole world sends out a prayer – but unfortunately God is still on his hols.

There is a chance, though, that good ole Ronnie wasn't just kiddin' about his nifty Star Wars project . . .

At the controls of a prototype SDI satellite, your mission, should you decide to fork out the credits, is to protect your country from the enemy's first strike.

The satellite is equipped with a laser which can be aimed with a trackball-controlled cursor and can itself be moved by a separate joystick.

The game is split into two stages: first comes the Offensive stage. Everything but the kitchen sink is up in the skies and out to get your satellite. It is up to you to blast the enemy's floating bases and planet-based silos with your lasers and to dodge their homing projectiles and bolts of energy: if one of them gets too close it's goodbye to one of your three lives.

If you're on the ball you might pick up an equipment pod: these speed up your ship, make the explosions from your lasers bigger, and give you extra cursors to improve your fire power.

While you're doing this the nukes are passing underneath in a lower orbit. You must at all costs blast these; otherwise there'll be a rather embarrassing hole in your home country and a loss of power to the satellite.

When the first wave of missiles has been dealt with, a space shuttle swallows up the satellite and moves it on to the the Defensive stage of *SDI*.

Compared with the previous section this is a doddle – and a rather unoriginal one at that. There's more than a splashing of *Missile Command* here. The bombs drop from the heavens like the thunderbolts of Zeus. Wipe 'em all out by moving downscreen and letting the cursor do all the work – it's a piece of cake, really.

To begin with, *SDI* really phased me – it's so much hassle. I couldn't cope with avoiding the hazards and frantically shooting things at the same time. After a few quid had dropped down the slot, things began to come together – but things also got tedious.

The second stage is a pleasure to play: it's simply a brilliantly improved and polished version of the old classic *Missile Command*. It's a shame that you have to go through the boringly long first stage to get to it . . .

BATLANTIS
Konami

BEN ■ Batlantis is another shoot-'em-up which bears more than a passing resemblance to another coin-op – Taito's *Space Invaders* (remember?) – but revamped, redesigned and regurgitated to 1987's high standards.

The action takes place on and beyond the ramparts of a castle which is being invaded by the forces of evil: ranks of demons, spined devils, winged beasts and the like, moving down the screen toward the castle wall.

A lone archer stands against these monstrous attackers. Running to left or right he can fire a brace of arrows at a time towards his advancing foes. As the rows of attackers reach the bottom of the wall they disappear from sight for a moment, only to reappear at the top and pause, ready to pounce on the archer.

At the end of each rank or level of horrors comes a frenzied attack from a giant meanie. These giants come in many different forms, from an axe-throwing maniac to a huge gory head that spits flames. I was surprised to find that *Batlantis* is one of the least-played newies around. It's very appealing and instantly playable – though after my last few quid had disappeared down the horrible hole I did wish I'd spent them on *R-Type* or *APB*. The graphics are a little blurred and unclear, but the sound and music leave nothing to be desired, except perhaps a little extra volume!

► *Batlantis – Space Invaders* **with a difference!**

R-TYPE
IREM Corporation

BEN ■ *R-Type* is in the genre of the frenetic shoot-'em-ups *Nemesis* and *Salamander* by Konami. The plot is also of the same unfathomable complexity – destroy the slobbish Bydo empire with your powerful spacecraft.

The screen scrolls horizontally from right to left through eight distinct levels: at the end of each level there is a rather gruesome monster, often occupying more than half the screen. Blast this and you'll be whisked off to the next landscape.

Hostile craft, robots and creatures attack from all sides: many of these Bydoian forces are well-armoured so it will often take more than just a few blasts from your R-9 ship to destroy them.

To increase the power of the ship's onboard laser, hold the fire button down, let go and a more deadly beam is released.

As the game progresses, a distinctive legged sphere appears on screen. Shooting this results in an add-on floating into view. This can be left to follow you around vaguely, or it can be guided toward R-9 and eventually connected to either end of the ship by pressing the ATTACH button.

The add-on can be shot off or jettisoned across the screen by pressing the ATTACH button again (useful for clearing out infested areas and going round corners). Shooting the sphere again and collecting the icon that it leaves behind will increase the add-on's fire power or give R-9 extra speed, more missiles or a shield.

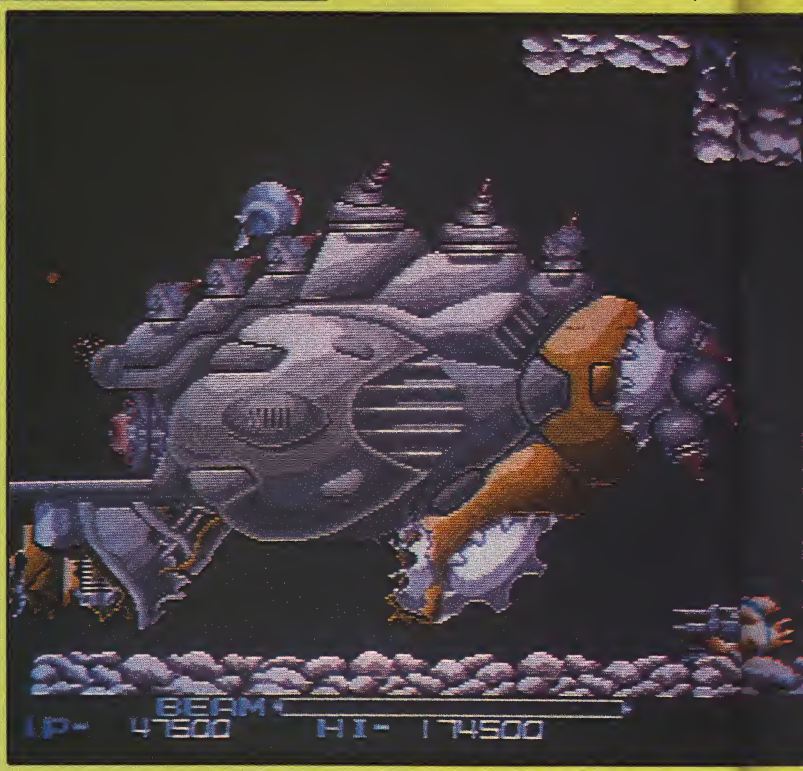
R-Type is undoubtedly the most impressive coin-op of the lot, and one of the hardest to get to play – because there's almost always a crowd round the cabinet! Graphically it's stunning: some of the later, more organic, palpitating levels are truly revolting. As for the game itself, it is simply second to none: difficult enough but sufficiently addictive to keep you piling in the credits.

► **More fighting in *R-Type***

TONY ■ Forget the rest, *R-Type* has to be the best game of its kind around. The graphics are brilliant, full of the sort of things you find at the bottom of packets of stale crisps and the liquorice all-sorts that nobody wants. The way the backgrounds fade in and out is just wild, and despite the huge number of independent characters that can be onscreen at any one time the game speed never slows down. There's an excellent range of pick-up weapons that help make life easier and lots of strategy involved later on.

R-Type is ultra-addictive, the sort of game you'd happily sell your granny to get change for. It makes *Nemesis* look like *Space Invaders* and is certain to burn a big hole in your pocket, but you'll love every minute of it.

► **R-9 bites the dust – who will save us now from the evil Bydo Empire in *R-Type*?**



► ***R-Type*, not a game to be played before dinner**

CAPTAIN SILVER
Data East Corporation

BEN ■ Treasure-hunting is the order of the day in this superb mystical adventure game. Armed with only a trusty sword, the boyish hero Captain Silver slashes his way through a multitude of meanies. The final goal, a cache of treasure, lies far across the seven seas on one of the many islands he encounters.

Extra weapons can be collected on the way. Swords may be picked up or purchased from a shop; magical powers appear as icons, such as shoes to make you run faster and jump higher, or they are obtained by touching the magic fairy who occasionally flits her way across the screen.

The enemies range from manically grinning Cheshire cats to drunken pirates and ghoulish skeletons, and there's a different tactic for defeating each type.

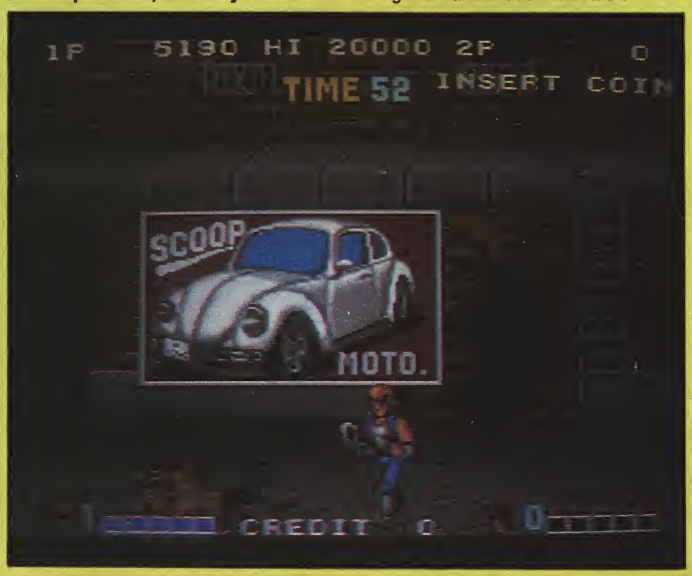
The levels, ranging from a small town (at the start) to a complex desert island, are joined together by a small stretch of sea, crossed in a jolly little boat . . .

Don't be put off by the run-of-the-mill Data East blurry and undefined look; the gameplay is sound so there's a lot of fun to be had from *Captain Silver*. The only drawbacks are that at first it's very difficult and, unusually for a coin-op, the controls take a bit of getting used to . . .

DOUBLE DRAGON

BEN ■ It's the same old story: the girl gets beaten up by a gang of no-good desperadoes and the guy goes chasing after them to free her, battling against overwhelming odds. And all because the lady loves hunky guys and horrible

► **Whip in hand, the kinky star of *Double Dragon* awaits a second attack**



APB
Atari

BEN ■ The *APB* cabinet is distinctive, to say the least. Like the early racing games it is equipped with a steering wheel and an accelerator pedal; there are also a couple of buttons on the dashboard to operate the car's gun and siren. (As well as being functional, sounding the siren sets off some funky flashing lights on top of the cabinet!)

The screen shows a bird's-eye view of a busy freeway overrun by traffic offenders: it is highway cop Bob's job to apprehend these petty criminals.

Each day Officer Bob, green as a gherkin and after swift promotion, is given a daily quota of arrests or tickets which must be fulfilled within a given time limit. At the end of the day, if all the work has been done, one of the game's many beautifully-animated sequences follows: the police chief, cigar in mouth, takes Bob into his office, hands out the congrats, mumbles something about Mom's apple pie and pats him on the back. If, on the other hand, the quota isn't completed the chief will do unspeakable things, leaving the luckless cop unable to carry on with the game.

A quick blast of the sirens should have most traffic violators quaking in their seats – the fear of American law and all that. Some are a little more reluctant to pull over, but a few more siren blasts or even a subtle nudge with the front end of the car should put the point across. Care must be taken, though, when nudging other cars – or other animate objects for that matter – as each crash or unnecessary collision notches up a demerit: too many of these in a day and Bob will be slung out of the force.

As the game progresses the quota gets bigger and the time limit shorter. Valuable extra time can be gained in the form of doughnuts, obtained either from doughnut shops or at the side of the road.

Eventually Bob has to catch real villains as well as road hogs. These crooks are a bit more difficult to deal with – they have to be run off the road by skill and brute force rather than simply pulled over. Some have speedier and better-equipped cars than our long-armed hero. 'Not fair!' I hear you cry. Well, there is a speed shop where Bob can collect better bits for his car; these include powerful brakes, better acceleration, guns and radar.

Once apprehended, no self-respecting law-breaker is going to confess to his crimes just like that, so Bob has got to beat a confession out of the rotter back at base.

There's a handy add-a-coin feature and a couple of *secret* level-advance modes . . .

APB is refreshingly different from the usual mass of bash-or-blast-'em-ups. Sound, graphics and gameplay make for one of the most addictive and fun-to-play arcade games around.

Many thanks to Toby Rothwell for playing *APB* (undercover) for us.

TONY ■ *Hill Street Blues* was never like this – and more's the pity. *APB* is one of the few games that is actually more fun when you *can't* play it very well; when Officer Bob is fired, the screen shows a poor cop being handcuffed by his mates and thrown into a trash can. And the police chief also shows his anger by breathing fire all over you!

APB fun and there's enough going on the keep you comming back for more.

► ***APB*: Car 54, where are you?**

► **Oops! There goes another car, and another demerit to boot, in *APB***

STREET FIGHTER

TONY ■ The *Street Fighter* machine we tested was still in the prototype stage, but here's a preview. Perhaps there'll be a full review when it hits the arcades nationwide later this year.

There is nothing new about a game which involves two kung-fu experts beating the living daylights out of each other against some elegant backdrop under the watchful eye of a wise-looking Chinaman. *Street Fighter*, however, breathes new life into this fast-fading scenario.

The cabinet is huge – the same size as the one used in the four-player version of *Gauntlet* – and the screen is around twice the normal size so the onscreen characters are also pretty big (nearly 10 inches high).

Each player has a joystick to control his character's movements, but there are also two beat-'em-up pads for punching and kicking. The harder you hit the pads the harder your character hits his opponent (and the more your hands hurt!).

The action is very fast and brilliantly realistic; the backgrounds are superb, the sound effects ace and the synthesized voice . . . abysmal. Well, you can't have everything.

Hitting the pads and moving the joystick in a certain sequence will give you access to secret techniques which devastate your opponent with ease. But after the first round you battle with four more deadly and, usually, armed opponents before moving on to do further battle in another country.

chocolates . . .

Double Dragon is a typical beat-'em-up, putting the usual set of punches, kicks and throws, and some original (albeit below-the-belt) moves like elbow-in-the-eye and knee-in-the-groin at your disposal.

One good touch: two can play at once, taking control of the boyfriend and his mate in their quest to win back the heart of the abducted girl (preferably with the rest of the body attached).

Your opponents usually have to be downed several times before they give up and disappear. You'll come across a few super baddies who make a theatrical entrance (smashing through the nearest wall and so on); these boys are a bit hard, and some of them carry baseball bats, whips, knives or even sticks of dynamite.

Still, a good couple of punches soon disarms an opponent, and you can pick up his weapon to use it yourself. Other objects found in the playing area, such as barrels, can also be thrown at opponents in the bitter fighting.

As you move through the levels you enter the enemy base where the girl is being held; on the final screen you can face as many as six opponents at a time.

TONY ■ This just has to be the best game of its kind around. It's action all the way, and thoroughly addictive – the kind of game you'd happily sell your granny to get change for. The backgrounds are good and most of them are interactive. You can climb walls, throw rocks or even shove the bad guys down the odd pothole.

It's depraved, sick, bloodthirsty, violent – and I love it!

► **No more ruffians to duff up in *Double Dragon* . . . it must be time to relax, to take a breather, to climb a fence?**

BLACK TIGER

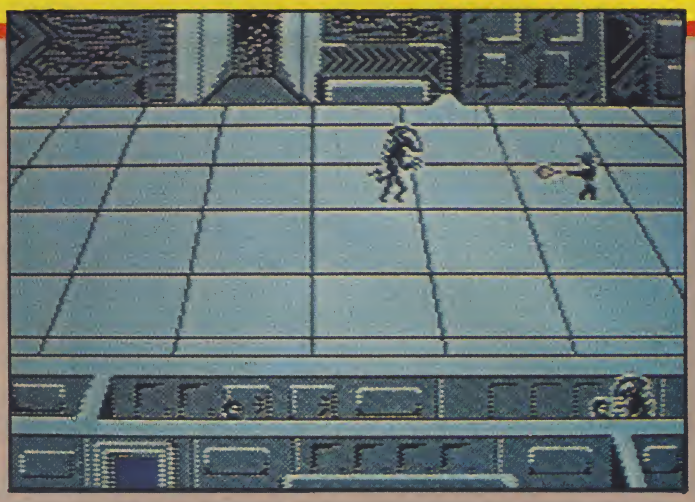
TONY ■ As soon as you start playing this game you experince a strong feeling of *déjà vu*. As the scrolling text tells you that you're the only surviving warrior from a race of thousands and that you must rescue your comarades and defeat the evil barbaric ones you meet along the way, you can't help feeling you've heard it all before.

But *Black Tiger* is surprisingly good. You face the usual assortment of warriors, dragons and wizards that you'd expect to meet down any dungeon, and on each level you have to rescue a set number of colleagues who have been turned to stone. When you rescue them, they thank you and offer you gifts of money, armour, weapons or magic potions. The money comes in useful for buying everything else and you'll need more armour and weapons as you get further into the game.

With skeletons and undead beings emerging out of the ground, *Black Tiger* might remind you of *Ghosts N Goblins* – but there is far more strategy involved.

MERELY MANGRAM – PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!



► 'Aha you fiendish US Alien! I's goin' blast yous brains out! Ha!'

IT HAS surprised me in the past that a good film doesn't spin off more than one game, since there are often many subplots to use, but at least **Activision** is having a second go at *Aliens*. The film came out in time for the last *PCW* Show, so that the Activision stand could have a rare preview of some scenes to hype the coming **Electric Dreams** game of the same name. It arrived at Christmas and received 84% in the February CRASH (Issue 37).

Now watch out for *US Aliens*. The adventure is split into six subgames – a compendium, no less! To kick off you are piloting the landing craft down onto the surface of planet LV-426, now inhabited by a bunch of amoral aliens who kill and cocoon anyone ill-advised enough to get within their armour-plated clutches.

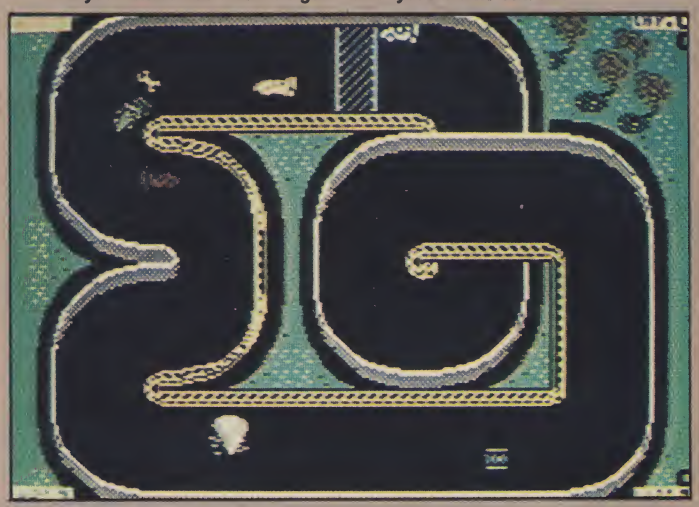
After landing you must return your fellow marines to the tank. The killing begins in the third part, as you fend off aliens with a flame-thrower. Then it's a quick race through the maze of air vents to Section Five where Newt, the colony's only human survivor, has to be found. The finale opens with a battle with the angry Queen alien, and the final curtain comes down when you eject her into space – if you manage to.

The clonedrome hits again – it's that interesting syndrome whereby software houses concentrate on the same format all at the same time. It looks like **Electric Dreams**'s *Super Sprint* and budget house **Code Masters**'s *Grand Prix Simulator* are to be released at about the same time. *Super Sprint* is the *official* version of the coin-op road racer featuring eight separate tracks with jump ramps, gates, short cuts and banked corners. Super sprinting press ambassador Andrew Wright, speaking for Electric Dreams, says 'You could be forgiven for thinking *Super Sprint* is just a high-class racing game.' Could I be forgiven, Andrew? Isn't it? Oh well.

So much for crunchy aliens, hurtling vehicles and biorhythmic balls, now on to something wholesome – the arcades. **Ocean** has one or two licenses kicking their heels on its superportable games machines, and one of them ought to have been featured on our sampler this issue – *Gryzor*. Unfortunately Ocean's Gary Bracey couldn't persuade their programmers to get anything suitable ready in time. *Gryzor* is from Konami – a hectic shoot-'em-up starring you as a one-man army. If you've seen the machine, you'll know what the graphics are like – and let's face it, Ocean will have a hard time putting those onto the Spectrum, but they're trying. It's split into three sections, each offering very different screens, but all featuring hectic battling against enemy soldiers out to prevent you from arriving wherever it is you're going – sounds like a day at CRASH Towers. Also from Ocean . . . look out for *Navy Moves* (sequel to *Army Moves*) and another great coin-op in *Rastan Saga*.

Mosaic has changed its diarist lately, unless Adrian Mole's grown up ferociously fast – now you can leaf through the annals of ministerial life in *Yes, Prime Minister*, licensed from the Beeb Beeb Ceeb. Parliamentary shenanigans are at the heart of this adventure as recently-re-elected Prime Minister James Hacker sets sail on his powerful career. Unfortunately, being a nice man, he has little idea of how to run the country. A relief, then, to see the astute political mind of Cabinet Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby is still on the team – but it's worth watching his loyalty as he's excellent at saving his own bacon rather than curing yours.

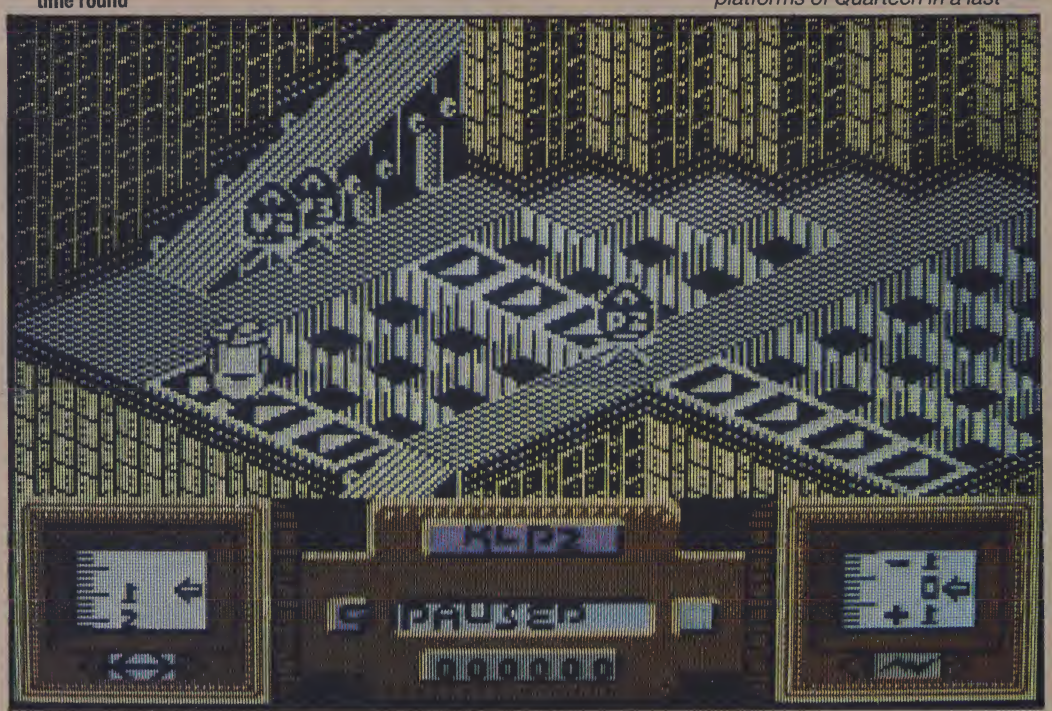
The only trustworthy person is your Private Secretary, Bernard Wolley (unless you count your very own Derek Brewster who will bring the complete political story as soon as we can get a mole other than Adrian to leak it).



► It's that Grand Prix simulator *Super Sprint* in from the arcades

Hewson's Steve Turner has been out of the limelight for a few months since *Ranarama* (apart from supplying music for the C64 version of *Anarchy*, a budget release on Hewson's new Rack-It label), but he's about to return with a follow-up to *Quazatron*, starring KPL2 again, called *Magnetron*. *KP (to be familiar . . .) is off on a new adventure set on the space platforms of Quartech in a last*

► KLP2 returns in his new adventure Magnetron, with no jerky scrolling this time round



► **Of course, anything you say, in fact:** *Yes, Prime Minister*

► **As the programmer puts it, 'the scrolly bit in** *Gryzor*'

► **I, Ball II, you Jane**

desperate attempt to blow up or neutralise the reactors which act as a life-support system for a marauding alien race (isn't it astonishing how often aliens maraud?). Magnetron should be hitting your screens in dark November.

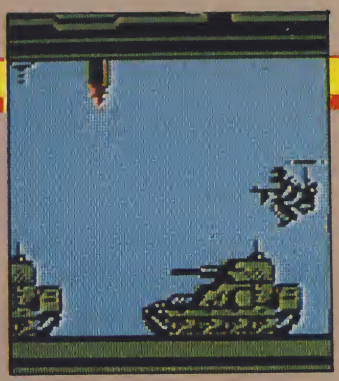
Birmingham's **US Gold** has launched its new label with the hyperactive name of **GO!**, and GO! is go with with a line-up of *Sidearms*, *Speed Rumbler*, *Bionic Commandos*, *Captain America*, *Brave Starr* and Lazer Tag games – a modest little launch.

Sidearms, a wild 'n' wacky shoot-'em-up set in space, is converted from the Capcom original. *Speed Rumbler* is a car game which finds you bringing peace and elegant charm to the world by shooting enemies and saving families – a sort of family entertainment, in fact.

GO! has announced a tie-up with Mattel which includes a game licensed from Mattel's toy, Brave Starr. Don't groan, it actually looks quite fun. It's about a cowboy of the future who lacks a hoss (poor lad) and has to make do with a jet-powered saddle instead. Should be ready for review next month . . .

GO! is also handling all the distribution for Mattel's Nintendo game system and the new craze in laser-tag light pistols – so if you want information on it write to the usual US Gold address, which can be found on their adverts.

But the GO!ers aren't having it all their own way when it comes to toy licences, because *Action Force* is go, and **Virgin Games** is go too – but not till late October, when Richard Branson's crowd releases the arcade shoot-'em-up adventure inspired by the well-known Hasbro toys. *Action Force* is currently being developed by the infamous Gang Of Five and features ten levels of play with eight screens each. The front-end presentation is great with spinning logos and all kinds of twiddly bits. Virgin person Patricia Mitchell says *Action Force* looks like being the big Christmas arcade game. Hmmm. Don't they all?



Another, and definitely not Virgin, lady arrived on our doorstep the other day. She was **Martech**'s Nadja Singh, who popped in to tell us that Martech has signed up Nigel Mansell for their new racing-car game. I guess that means he's endorsing the product rather than actually programming the game.

Nadja, who admits to preferring sheep to smelly combustion engines, says the game features the latest in car-design technology, but if you can't be bothered with digital controls and the like there's a perfect opportunity to simply blast around the track at excessive speeds without a care for fuel consumption, tyre wear or the racing line. *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* will be out at the end of November on most popular formats (and available at all good car-spares shops).

THE HARDEST BLOW

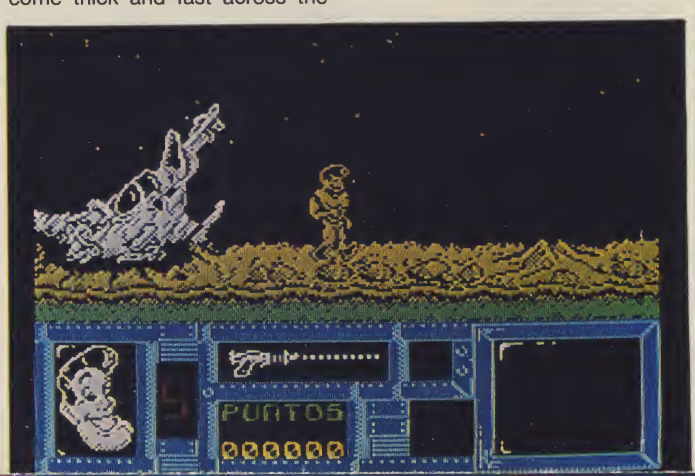
FREDDY HARDEST

Imagine *£7.95* *End October*

After *Army Moves* and *Game Over* comes *Freddy Hardest* from Spanish software house Dinamic (this time accompanied by an advertisement which does not feature exposed mammaries!).

Freddy, the cheapest playboy in the known universe, has done it again. His heightened sense of direction has dumped him on an inhospitable planet some way off in the galaxy's eastern spiral arm. Like many computer game heroes before him (remember Jetman in *Jetpac*?), Freddy tramps around in search of bits and pieces to repair his space craft. And, as so many have also discovered to their undying horror, the planet's inhabitants, marauding naturally, come thick and fast across the horizontally scrolling landscape to Freddy his hardest time yet.

Luckily Freddy's laser pistol proves to be adequate when it comes to terminating aliens with extreme prejudice, although it's of little use for getting round the craters filled with bubbling lava with which the planet's surface is riddled. They are, of course, lethal to our hero, as are the more advanced aliens which he meets further along in the game. Similar to other Dinamic offerings, *Freddy Hardest* consists of two levels. Sorry, but my preview copy doesn't contain any of the second level, so you'll just have to wait for the review to find out what that's all about.



YOU CAN BE A BERK II

Through The Trap Door

Piranha *£8.95* *End October*

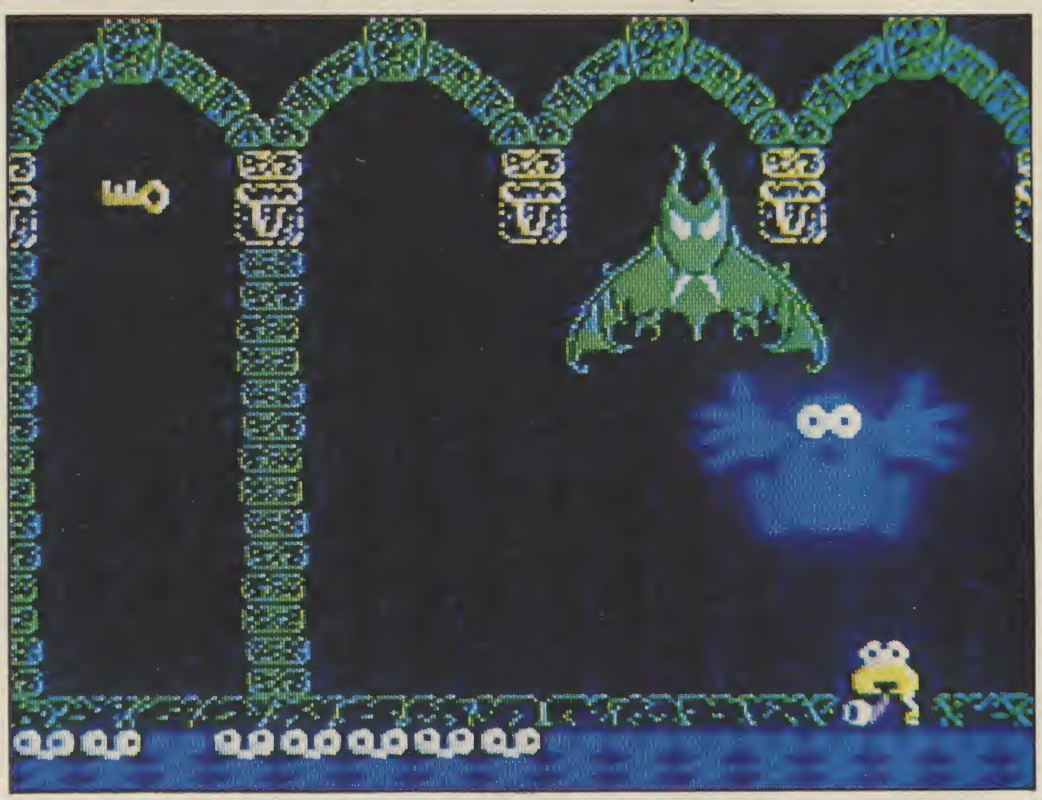
'Greetings O great and wobbly viewers to more of my glorious adventures . . . ' Berk, the blundering big blue lummox from *Trap Door*, Don Priestley's successful task-orientated game of last winter, makes a very welcome return in his new adventure – *Through the Trap Door*.

The Trap Door, famed for the grotesquerie that appear from its dark maw, has been causing problems again. Boni, the moaning skull, has been abducted by some cuddly but ferocious monster and taken down to the damp murky depths of the land below. Holding his nose, but ever undaunted, Berk grabs little Drutt the mutant spider and leaps through the door to the rescue.

Unlike most of Don's recent games *Through The Trap Door* is much more action packed, but still retains the characteristically large and colourful graphics. Instead of having to explore rooms and solve lengthy puzzles, the game takes place in a long corridor which scrolls horizontally across the screen. You can play either Berk or Drutt swapping between the two characters as required, after all Berk is positively too fat to do some things and that's where little Drutt may be of help.

On his travels Berk comes across occasional magic potions which give him powers such as flying and bouncing. You'll need to work out which potion to use to get past some of the more unpleasant creatures.

Bug-eyes along the bottom of the screen represent the snoozeometer – if the two heroes take too long to get past specified points the bugs fall asleep and when all are slumbering either Berk or Drutt lose a life. If you're reading this at the PCW Show, be sure to visit Piranha's stand where *Through the Trap Door* and Berk are on display.



► That big blue Berk returns in *Through The Trap Door*, but just what is Berk up to? (About three feet, methinks - Ed)

► 'Oh Gobbets! It's one of them peculiar creatures . . . !'

WIN A BERK!

Do you want a Berk – to have and to hold, to love and to cherish and keep him all for your very own? Piranha are offering a cuddly blue Berk for someone to win in this Quick-Comp. Simply name two other Don Priestley games, write them down on a postcard and post to: I WANNA BERK, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* to arrive no later than 25 October, which is, incidently, around the time when *Through The Trap Door* is to be released.

THE CLASSIFIEDS

LASER GENIUS **48/128** swap for *The Pawn* or *WHYK* A Schimnel, *5 Darwin Close, Nottingham, NG5 9LN*

WANTED *The Biz* and *Horse Racing Manager* by Virgin will swap or buy Gary Sutton, *20 Danbury Close, Marksley, Essex, CO6 1XL*

TIMEX PRINTER, Paper, Protek Interface, QSII, Offers? Top software eg *Gauntlet, Zoids* for sale or swap for CBM 64 games. Tel James: 0306 886829 after 6.00 pm.

POWERTRAIL is a *Spectrum Fanzine*. We need pokes new and old, maps, and views on presentation. Write to *1 Ashbury Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks., RG3 5LJ*

FOR SALE *Spectrum 48K, DK Keyboard, Interface, Joystick, Speech Box, Light Pen, 64K Shadow of the Unicorn*, worth over £400 new. Will sell for £75. *Phone Lee on High Wycombe 37442.*

URGENT, SWAP my *Turbo Esprit, Back to Skool, Feud* for your *Theatre Europe* contact *Paul Kehoe, 62 Cranfield Road, Marus Bridge, Wigan, WN3 5QG.*

ELITE **WANTED**, swap for five of *Commando, Fairlight, Movie, Saboteur, Leaderboard, Tournament, Tapper, Robin of the Wood, Super Soccer or Zombie x2* write to: *R Brown, 9 Queens Close, Norwich, NR4 7PE.*

SINCLAIR ZX PRINTER plus five rolls of paper with manual. In good working order £15. *Phone: 061-338 4274* after 6.00 pm.

WANTED 128K WAFERS for Rotronics Wafadrive. Will pay £3 for each one in excellent condition only. *Tel. Weston-super-Mare 813282.* After 6.00 pm.

PENPALS WANTED must be a Spectrum User, interested in writing not copying programs. Write to: *Ian Edwards, 202 Sterling Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1ST.* I'll bin chain letters!

SPECTRUM SOFTWARE FOR SALE: Price from £1, *VAT Manager, Ian Botham, Cricket, Backpackers, Pole Position* and more. All original. *Phone Sam 01-368 3784.*

WANTED, ***THE RATS*** in exchange for a top recent release. *Allan Edginton, 2 Langton Villas, Hampden Road, London, N17 0BA.*

WANTED ISSUE 1 AND 9 OF CRASH. Cash or software. *Phone York 761090* evenings.

SWAP my *Dealtevators, Jason's Jem and Incredible Shrink Fireman* for one of your *Arkanoid or Army Moves. Please phone 0229 29722.* Ask for Richard.

LOTS OF GAMES TO SWAP. Send your list for mine. eg *Elite, Enduro Racer, Star Quake David Cashin, 132 Donomore Avenue, Killinardan, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Ireland.*

SPEC MATE Order the first issue now. Send a p/o for 50p to *D Cummings, 64 Southfields Drive, Stanground, Peterborough, PE2 8DX.* (Please state name and address).

SPEC**, Great New Fanzine** for ZX Spectrum, only 40p. Issue 1 available October 5th. Send SAE for details to *N Jones, 34 Lyndale Drive, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, W Yorks, WF2 0JZ.* All letters answered.

PEN PAL WANTED. Own Spectrum 48K. Also own Amstrad, CPC64 would also like to swap games. *Christian Capstaff, 8 Apsley Rd, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR30 2HG.*

SAGA EMPEROR KEYBOARD for sale £22.00, *Spectrum Power supply* £5.00, *Spectrum Rubber Keyboard* £7.50 - all in A1 condition *Phone Chorley 76171* after 6.00pm Martin.

New Barton Street, Salford, Manchester.

FOR SALE Snapshot 2 Interface will swap for any printer. Also wanted a Multiface 1. All letters answered. Write to *Gary Mulvihill, 46 Calderwood Road, Donnybrook, Douglas, Cork, Eire.*

NEW UNWANTED GAMES TO SWAP. Games include *Mutant, Vulcan, GAC, The Boggit, Scalextric* etc.. Also interested in fantasy board games. Ring Spencer any time on *(0322) 69472.*

VERY GOOD SELECTION of Spectrum games for sale from 50p to £4.00 or will swap. Phone after 5pm. *01-654 1392.*

IT'S A CRIME! *PBM Turf Mapper* for Spectrum. Full on-screen and printer details of up to 240 blocks. £1 ppd from *Andrew Rose, 68 Milward Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3RR.*

SOFTWARE TO SWAP send list of games to *Nick Simms, 3 Nuneaton Road, Fillongley, Warwickshire, CV7 8EZ, (0676) 42508* 'I only swap good games.'

WANT TO SWAP GAMES will swap all kinds phone for list *Tel: James on 0494 786631* Swap Animator One for Art Studio Please.

ROTRONICS WAFADRIVE £30 or swap for other hardware plus £20. All offers considered. Write to *Robert Gall, 14A Rectory Lane, Glinton, Peterborough, Cambs, PE6 7LR.*

SPECCY FANZINE *Eprom* Issue Two, great articles, reviews, viesws, intervies and things. Definitely the best around! Only 70p plus stamp from:- *328 The Maltings, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs PR1 9FD*

SELL OR SWAP your original software through our established free newsletter. Make extra money! Get those new games! Free details (stamp please) from *Robert Burgess, 1 Middlefield Road, Rotherham, S60 3JH*

ARKANOID, *Droid, Academy, Six Pack*, Exchange for any games adventures or *Leaderboard* have many other times. *James Scott, 3 Wilton Close, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1EZ or 0823 337817*

SOFTWARE TO SWAP. Many good titles write for list to *Peter Davis, The Rath, Swords, County Dublin or ring Dublin 405083.*

SPRINT. Yes a great new fanzine is now out. Only 30p; all about the *Spectrum*. For more information phone Alan on *01 959 0518*

FREE SOCCER PBM! Absolutely no charge except an SAE per turn. Reply now to ensure your place. Totally free! Interested? SAE to *THS, 47 Spencer Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5LE.* Now!

12 YEAR OLD COMPUTER FREAK seeks similar for correspondence. Apply: *Knut Lodge, Viking Heights, Martlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4RT* my name is *James Heathfield*

SWAP SCOTCH PHOTOCOPIER VGC for software, hardware or anything interesting. All letters answered, write to *Martin O'Connor, 56 Whittington Hill, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbys., S41 9HA.*

PBM RUGBY LEAGUE CHALLENGE can you lead your team to the championship SAE for further details to *Camelot Games, Cae-Ymryson, Caernarvon, Gwynedd, LL55 2LR.*

HI! I have 400 games to swap, send your list for mine to *Michael Pritchard, 22 Heol Keir Hardie, Penywaun, Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan, CF44 9AW.*

INSTANT ACCESS is the only poke magazine especially for Multiface, Issue 2 out now only £1.00 to *C Redgrave, 30*

CHAOS!

The only problem with these classifieds is they might upset Lloyd. You see, there have been so many ads – for fanzines, software swaps, pen pals, pokes, copies of *Spycatcher* – flying in to the Towers that they're threatening to overpower the pile of Forum letters in the mail room.

There's a good side to this invasion, though; starting next month, the classifieds will be printed under headings. Just mark on the form which heading you want your ad to go under.

And remember there are a few rules governing these free classified ads . . .

1 Individuals and small organisations such as fanzines and homegrown-software publishers are welcome to use the CRASH classifieds, but professional businesses cannot. Paid-for classifieds for businesses will probably be introduced soon.
2 Classified ads should not be more than 30 words long (numbers, postcodes etc count as one word each), and should be written in the boxes provided; there is no box-number service, so **YOUR AD COPY MUST INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER.**
3 Classified ads must be submitted on a CRASH classifieds form, or a photocopy of the form.
4 Absolutely no ads for selling or swapping pirated software or which encourage software piracy will be accepted.
5 CRASH reserves the rights to edit, publish and not publish classified ads without reference to the advertiser, and the magazine is not liable for any loss caused to advertisers through their own wording of ad copy or the appearance or nonappearance of ads.
6 If you send an ad in PLEASE don't ring us up asking when it's going to be published – we'll just print as many in each issue as whingeing Lloyd lets us . . .

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15 YR OLD MALE would like to swap software with male or female penpal over 400 titles write to *R Shaw, 11 Fulsham Crescent, Ayr, KA8 0ND.*

WANTED MULTIFACE 128 - must be reasonable. Please phone *(0782) 626920* after four o'clock. Ask for Edward.

CRASH BACK ISSUES numbers 2, 7, 13 wanted. Good prices paid. Write to *Robert Lines, The Last House, Gomer Lane, Gosport, PO12 2QW.*

128K AND 48K SOFTWARE to swap. Also wap or sell Slo-mo, Kempston, Interface. Send your list for mine to *V Vity, 19 Croft Street, Morecambe, Lancs., LA4 5SS.*

RESTART is a great Spectrum games mag costing 40p and a stamp from *Restart, 1 The Beams, Ufton Close, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8EH.*

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SUNDAY LEAGUE the soccer PBM Game. For further details send a SAE to Sport Games, 1 Patricia Drive, Arnold, Notts, NG5 8GJ.

WANTED Opus Discovery for £40 Ramturbo, Elite, Bounces, Hot Shots, Kung Fu Master, Arkanoid, Music-Box, Dam Busters, Max Headroom, Deathstar, Interceptor. Contact Paul phone (0634) 64179.

DEATH BALL A PBM game where anything goes, players required for new seasonabout to begin. Send a SAE A P Overton, 23 Falconer Lane, Woodhouse Mill, Sheffield, S13 9ZL.

WANTED ALPHACOM 32 WITH PAPER £15 available for a good one. Microdrive cartridges also wanted. Write to Mick Blackman, 3 Giffard Drive, Cove, Farnborough, Hants., GU14 8PU.

HELP AND SUGGESTIONS NEEDED for running my own PBM wargame it would have armies, nukes, civilians and careful economy would be needed. Thanks. Jason Smith, 1 Galloway Road, Swinton.

SNOOPY paperbacks wanted nos 46, 41, 39, 31. All CRASH issues available, *GAC* for £10, *Zynaps* for £4 Phone (Ringwood) 04254 5772.

SPECTRUM +, still boxed, interface, joystick over £360 worth of software and mags as new would cost over £500. Sell for £160. Tel 0602 273621.

SPECTRUM 48K FOR SALE plus Kempston Interface and a few games £45 ono. Phone Derby (0332) 810773.

WANTED SPECTRUM 48K OR 128K with or without disk interface. I also need a teletext decoder. For sale: RAM Music Machine. Tel Collins 01-579 9455.

WANTED 128K SPECTRUM for around £60. Box and leads desirable. Humberside area preferred. 45 Huntley Drive, Murrayfield Road, Hull, HU5 4DP. Tel (0482) 442725.

SWAP Aliens, Ace, Super-Soccer, Commodore 1531, Datasse II, Catch 23, Great Escape, Firelord, Head Over Heels, Vulcan, Yankee, Sherlock, Zub, Hobbit and more phone Stefan on 091-460 4861.

WILL SWAP Great Escape or Scooby Doo for both games called Knight Tyme and Stormbringer. Lee Davis 01-745 2332.

SPECTACULAR is the hip 'n' cool fanzine to be seen reading! Send 50p and a stamp to J Davies, 28 Claremont Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8DH.

DOES ANYONE OUT THERE know how to get out of the Marsh in the Shadows of Mordor? If so please write to tell me. Thanks. Robert Gregson, 14 Lindsay Road, Walton, Liverpool 4, Merseyside, L4 8SR.

SPECTRUM +, Currah Speech, Tape Deck, over £150 worth of books and software cost over £320. The whole lot for only £100 ono. Phone (0903) 724057.

WINNERS & PRIZES

DESIGN A GAME FOR DOMARK

The winners and runners-up for this Issue 39 comp were decided by Richard Naylor of Domark and Graham Stafford of Design Design – or Walking Circles, as it's called now. The winning entry was a game design called *Pile Driver* and came from **Tony Worrall** of Lancashire PR1 9FD, who edits the Spectrum fanzine *EPROM.*

Well done, Tony, and don't fritter your £500 cash prize away, now – you *could* pay to have the broom cupboard redecorated.

A special second prize went to **J Fradley** of Yeovil BA20 2PB for a model.

Some of the 23 runners-up were ZZAP! 64 readers (the same comp was run in ZZAP!), so they shouldn't expect two prizes just because they're listed here too – anyway, ZZAP! readers should be honoured enough to have their names mentioned in CRASH. All these runners-up win games on the Streetwise label . . .

Marcel van Driel, 7206 BV Zutphen, Holland; Marcus Light, W Yorks BD15 8LA; Andrew Sandham, Aberdeenshire AB3 4HQ; Brian Burrell, Essex CM15 0EW; Leo Martin/Stephen Bradshaw, Hove BN3 6AA; Raymond Chan, E Sussex BN4 2PP; Julian Stockoc, Levin, New Zealand; Howard Carlisle, Leeds LS18 4HD; Lucian Paul Hoare, London SE4 2DT; Iain Murrey, Fife KY11 5AE; Khalid Jamil, London NW2 6LA; Gary McDiarmid, Angus DD7 6DS; Tim Eggleton, Milton Keynes MK3 6PP; Elout de Kok, 7907 GE Hoogeveen, Holland; Ian West, Bucks MK18 2PE; Simon E Critchley, Hull HU14 3NN; Anthony Jarvis/Matthew Whitby, Essex IG9 6AE; Timothy Hodges, Cambs PE3 6YL; John Atkinson, Cumbria CA15 7DD; Kevin Payne, Avon BS18 2RZ; and Stuart Thurston, Worcester

HERCULE DE MINION COMP

US Gold's super sleuthing comp in Issue 43 brought in a milliard entries, and for those of you waiting on the edge of your seats wanting to know who stole my buttered scone the answer is **Lloyd Mangram** (not Skippy!). Nasty creature – it's the last time I prune his roses! Anyway, the winner (who gets a Pink Panther video, Agatha Christie's novel *Death On The Nile* and the Issue 42 Smash *Killed Until Dead*) is **Jonathon Lari** of Wales CF6 2DG.

Four second prizes – a detective novel and *Killed Until Dead* each – go to **James Yeo** from Bedfordshire MK44 1BL; **Nicholas Young** from Lancashire OL3 5EG; **C Walker Smith** from Derby, DE2 9LL; and **Gareth C Jones** from Cardiff CF5 3SW. 15 more copies of *Killed Until Dead* go to:

Tom Holstein, Hampshire RG23 7AA; Adam Briggs, Notts S81 0NX; A Wilson, Angus DD3 6DW; Roxanne Bailey, Reading RG2 9DL; Paul Dixon, Kent BR8 7YR; Stuart Brown, West Yorkshire LS8 4BY; Richard Wall, Kent CT4 6QJ; A P Goode, Birmingham B42 1LW; Darren Martimer, Birmingham B31 3UH; Stuart Highley, Nottinghamshire NG12 5LQ; John Croasdale, Nottinghamshire NG15 9FT; Philip Louther, Lancs FY5 3QD; Nichola Truscott, Gloucester GL2 6UA; Daniel Wade, nr Southport, Lancs; and Thomas Price, Devon EX 2EE

WHOOOOPS!

OK, so I made a mistake – and they'll never let me forget it. In the Ferguson adventure comp in Issue 41, Question 4 should have been 'Type in Fordo's birthday – which game's that?' – as in **For**do from CRL's *Bored Of The Rings* rather than **Fro**do who, as everyone but me knew, is the hero of *Lord Of The Rings.* You don't get much literature in the broom cupboard . . .

ENTERING COMPETITIONS

If you want to send entries to more than one CRASH competition in the same envelope, write MULTIPLE ENTRY on it clearly and send it to *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

You are reminded, as if you need to be, that the editors' decision is final when it comes to picking the winners and deciding the correctness of answers to questions set. Also, the exact number of winners and runners-up may be slightly different from that announced in the competition (depending largely on the number and quality of entries), though prizes will be exactly as promised whenever possible.

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PAUL

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URGENT NOTICE Don't be misled by adverts showing 'between prices.' A recent complaint against a Manchester repair firm, Mancomp, was upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority on two counts, "It had stated BBC repairs between £14 and £45 then charged the customer £85." Their guarantee policy was misleading as it did not make clear that all repairs were not covered.

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ET AL

GOGGLE!

VIDS TO FREEZE YOUR FRAME FOR . . .

CIC Video fronts its attack on the rental shelves with the biggest release for October, *Top Gun*, starring **Tom Cruise** (*Risky Business, Legend, The Color Of Money*) as an ambitious young fighter pilot, training at the US Navy's prestigious Fighter Weapons School. **Kelly McGillis** (*Witness*) also stars as the school's lecturer with whom Cruise becomes romantically involved.

Top Gun was the most successful video ever when released in the US late last year – but it was knocked off the Number One slot by another CIC release, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. **Matthew Broderick** (*War Games, Ladyhawke*) stars as a smooth-talking, attractive and intelligent teenager living life to the full. After convincing his best friend, Cameron, that they must borrow his father's 1961 Ferrari, he sets off with friends to tour the sights of downtown Chicago. It's on the shelves now so don't miss it.

On the same label and from the writers of *Top Gun* comes *Legal Eagles*, featuring **Robert Redford** as an Assistant District Attorney and **Debra Winger** as a competing lawyer – they combine their legal minds to solve a crime going back 15 years.

The last day of September sees **Entertainment In Video**'s release of of the comedy/horror film *House II*. The old owner has moved out (wise fellow!) but some poor fool (tempted by the low price, no doubt) moves in to take his place. **Chris Walas** (*The Fly, Gremlins*) is responsible for the scary special effects. **CBS Fox** gets ready for big business, too, with the hugely successful *Crocodile Dundee* hitting the shelves in October. So much has been said about this Australian wonder that many people have come away disappointed after all the hype – still, don't miss it. And CBS Fox also has *Peggy Sue Got Married* out for October – a sort of *Back To The Future* for 'grown-ups', starring **Kathleen Turner** (*Prizzi's Honour, Jewel In The Nile*) in the title role.

On October 12 *Nobody's Fool*, from newcomers **Sony Video Software**, reaches the shops. **Rosanna Arquette** (*Desperately Seeking Susan, After Hours*) plays the part of Cassie, torn between the lover of her chequered past (whom she stabbed in a restaurant) and her present attraction to Riley (played by **Eric Roberts** from *Runaway Train*).

Look out at the end of October for **CIC Video**'s release *The Whoopee Boys*. Two youngsters, Jake and Barney, go to finishing school to help a beautiful Palm Beach heiress gain her inheritance and marry the perfect gentlemen. With the duller months coming on it looks like there's a lot of goggle-box watching coming up to alleviate those 'exciting' new autumn TV schedules. We'll try and review as many as we can.

▶ *Peggy Sue Got Married*

▶ *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*

▶ *Top Gun*

AT LONG LAST SINCLAIR

ON SEPTEMBER 1 Sir Clive Sinclair's long-awaited new kneetop computer, the Z88, was put on sale in the high-street chain stores Comet and Dixons. It retails for £287.50 (batteries not included!).

'The Z88 is a fraction of the cost of its competitors, yet it is the most advanced and powerful portable computer on the market,' said Sir Clive at a press conference on September 3, finally launching the product which was first expected in the New Year.

The tiny Z88, with keyboard and screen together only the size of CRASH, comes with built-in software which includes word-processing and spreadsheet functions, a calculator program, a diary, a database, a calendar, a clock and (wait for it) BBC BASIC and assembler.

Production has started in Scotland by SCI UK, part of the American SCI corporation – the world's largest subcontractor in computer manufacturing, according to Sinclair.

SUNK!

YOU may be wondering why CRASH hasn't mentioned *Battleships* – Elite's conversion of the classic board game is grabbing covers and smash-hit reviews from *Computer & Video Games* and *Your Sinclair*.

Well, the Elite warriors decided discretion is the better part of valour and after hearing some negative comments on *Battleships* they've decided to 'sit on the game,' said Elite's Geoff Grimes.

'Until it's improved,' he added, '*Battleships* will not be released as a full-price game.' Elite's decision backs up the opinion of CRASH reviewers who saw *Battleships* before it was withdrawn.

WOT NO SEARING?

Sorry there's no Terminal Man this issue – Oli's been overworked what with three mags and next month's 3-D issue. (It takes half as much time again to paint in a third dimension . . .) But the story will be back next month, he assures us, with that Anchor In Space in full.

Et Al

► Keep on wagglin': Konix competition winner Maris Geert in Brussels

RIDDLE OF BOFFINS' WAG BID TRAGEDY

IN a shock move that left thousands of European waggling enthusiasts shaking all over, joystick manufacturer Konix last night announced the collapse of its record-breaking Speed King after 17,604,000 waggles, *Our Waggling Editor writes.*

A shaken spokesman described the tragedy, which took place in front of 20,000 horrified holidaymakers (well, one or two bored functionaries at Konix's Welsh plant). 'It just started missing the odd click,' said Michael Baxter, 'nothing particularly phenomenal.'

But there were smiles through the tears for Belgian waggler Maris Geert, who won £100 in a competition to guess the joystick's endurance. Geert's estimate of 643 hours was off by only nine hours – the Speed King actually lasted 652 hours (more than 27 days), at 450 waggles per minute.

Said Geert: 'I had heard how durable the Speed King is, and so I worked out how long decent joysticks should last when playing *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, doubled it – et voilà!'

Guesses at the joystick's waggling life had ranged from 14 minutes (believable of some products?) to eight years; both people who submitted those extreme estimates have been rewarded with Speed Kings, joining some half million happy Konix wagglers worldwide.

The company will release a £12.95 autofire Speed King at The *PCW* Show, and it's planning a 'beautiful new concept' in joysticks, to be launched in the New Year. Added a highly-placed source: 'We are confident that *Ed – is this plug for Konix long enough?*

PEE-ARE-MANIA

Number One in an occasional series: THE SPONGE

This is a sponge. A round green sponge sent to us by **Lesley Mansford** from **Electronic Arts**. Fine. We threw it around for a while, Roger stuck it to his computer and squeezed it occasionally, and Ricky used it to mop his brow in the sweltering heat. Pah!

After much deliberation we decided it smelt like a Heathrow departure lounge carpet. BUT seriously, viewers, after a bit of investigative journalism **Et Al** discovered that it was a **Nerf Ball** – an American Invention.

You're supposed to have hundreds in the office and whenever a Nerf Break is called for, everybody turns ga-ga and bungs them around supposedly 'to relieve pent up tension'. Unfortunately, with only one Nerf Ball, Nerf breaks aren't as jolly as they should be.

(That's enerf Nerf Balls -Ed Dir)

► The Nerf Ball held ready for a spot of nerfing (note expensive manicure done at Ludlow Beauty Emporium)

BUBBLE BABBLE TOY TROUBLE

Competition ahoy! Pictured above are Ben and Ricky outside in the park playing with some odd contraption known as the **Incredibubble** from **MHI Toys**. The long pole Ben is sticking into the bubble mixture houses at its end a loop of what looks like knicker elastic. Pull back the tube on the pole, the loop opens and, hey presto! when held to the wind, it forms and reieases a gigantic bubble . . .

Unfortunately the contraption could only be made to blow one measly bubble, and after spending an hour or more playing about with it we thought it had better be put to some use – so here's a wee comp.

We're not going to give away a recalcitrant bubble-maker, but you *can* win some CRASH bubble bath and a CRASH T-shirt (see page 143); send a caption for this absurdly odd photo to BUBBLES IN THE BATH, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* to arrive no later than 25 September. Oh I'm forever blowing Bubbles . . .

► It's Ben and Ricky . . . but can you think of a caption? The sillier the better

FIRST DOLE-PLAYING GAME

You Are Maggie Thatcher by Hunt Emerson and Pat Mills. Published by Titan Books at £4.95

The combination of potent cartoonist Hunt Emerson and role-playing writer and one-time *2000 AD* editor Pat Mills bring a wicked sense of political humour to this first ever comic-strip adventure book. You get a chance to become North Finchley's greatest heroine, bullying, cajoling and (hardly ever) guiding Britain through crises of enormity whilst never losing sight of the real goal – your political career.

Somewhere in spirit between *Private Eye* meets Dungeons and Dragons and *Spitting Image* takes on Judge Dredd, *You Are Maggie Thatcher* is a novel experience for the politically aware role-player with an eye on Parliament. It's out on 30 October, but be warned; some of the humour may offend!

ROGER KEAN

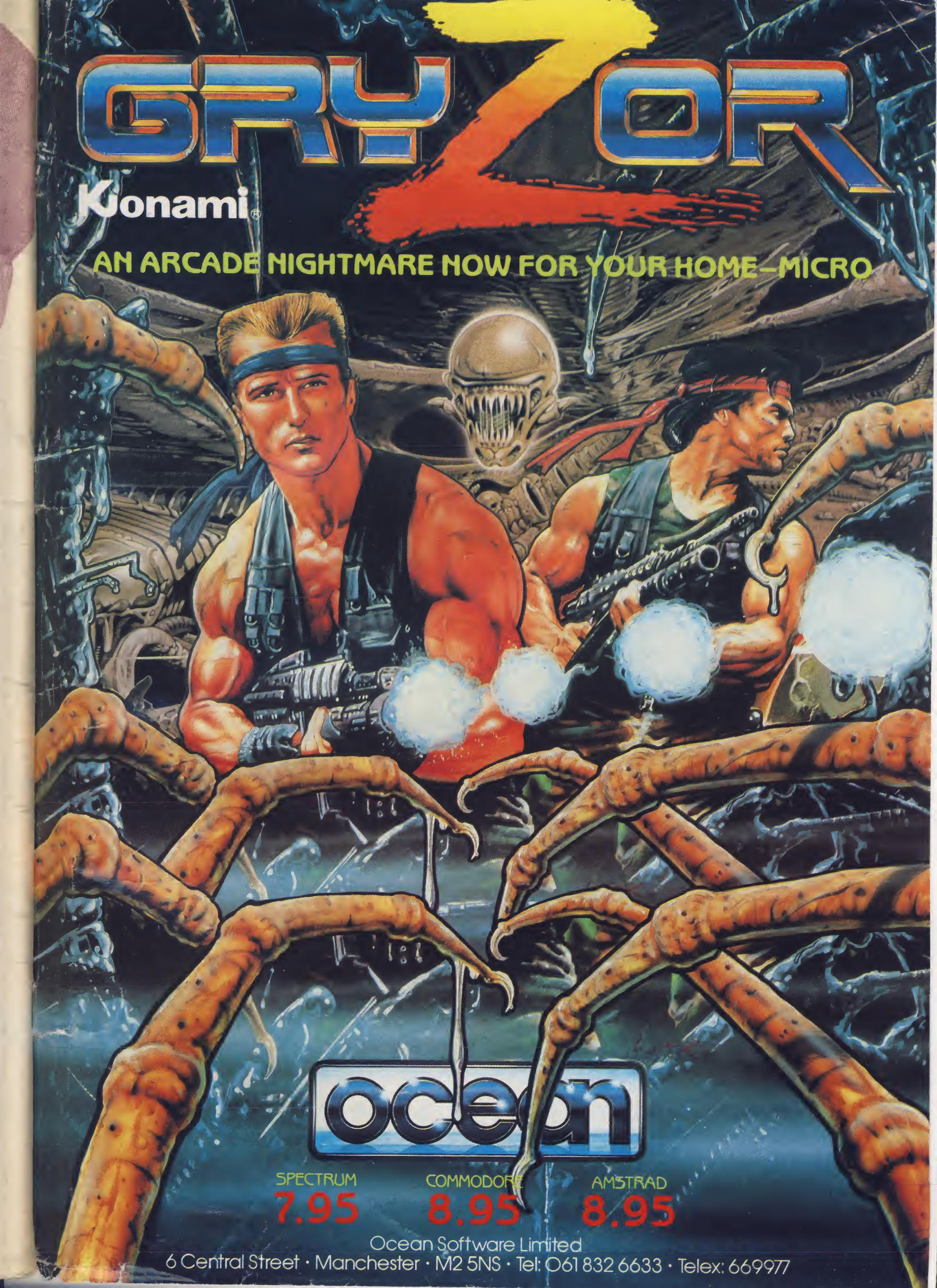
ET AL's LITERATURE COLUMN

The World's Best Computer Jokes by Rex Malik. Published by Angus & Robertson at £1.95

Having picked up *The World's Best Computer Jokes* I imagined I was in for an afternoon tittering and spluttering mouthfuls of coffee over the Spectrum at the turn of a page. But it was not to be. I can't help thinking that this book is the kind of thing Amstrad would sling in with their PC systems as a complement (if not a compliment) to the manual. Most jokes are what I would term schoolboy humour for business executives after a hard day on their IBM mainframes.

Written jokes are along the lines of 'My computer is user-friendly, but not over familiar . . . ', and cartoons are in the middle-aged man sits at home computer and on the screen appears, 'Get rid of the wife' vein.

The World's Best Computer Jokes may be a nice stocking filler for Uncle Harry at Christmas in exchange for the orange Y-fronts three sizes to big he gave you last year, but don't expect any decent guffaws or any mention of the Spectrum either. **RICKY EDDY**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†The draw will take place on November 30th. All vouchers to be included in the draw should be returned by October 30th.

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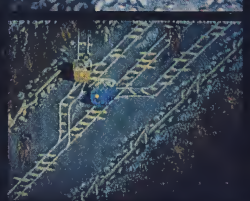

Beware the foes and hazards that block your way. The Thuggee guards will fight to the finish and poisonous cobra snakes will rise up in front of you. You will traverse perilous ledges, ride under-ground railways, and cross the bottomless fiery pit in pursuit of your quest!

You will call on all your reserves of courage, strength and skill. Push yourself to the limit, ride your luck and the magical stones may just be yours!

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